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JAMES CURRIE, M.D. F.R.S.

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MEMOIR

OF THE

LIFE, WRITINGS, AND CORRESPONDENCE

OF

JAMES CURRIE, M.D. F.R.S.

OF LIVERPOOL,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, EDINBURGH,
LONDON MEDICAL SOCIETY, &c. &c.

EDITED BY HIS SON,

WILLIAM WALLACE CURRIE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR
LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1831.

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TO

WILLIAM ROSCOE, ESQ.

My dear Sir,

In dedicating these Volumes to one who was so naturally marked out by the public voice, as the person best qualified for the task which I have undertaken, while I deeply regret the different causes which have prevented you from executing it, I have this pleasure at least — that of testifying the attachment and respect with which

I am, my dear Sir,

Your affectionate and grateful

Friend and Servant,

Wm. Wallace Currie.

Liverpool, Nov. 25. 1830.

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MEMOIR

OF THE

LIFE, WRITINGS, AND CORRESPONDENCE

OF

JAMES CURRIE, M.D. F.R.S.

Dr. James Currie, the subject of the present Memoir, was descended from a race of Scottish borderers, who, during the separation of the island into two kingdoms, were probably accustomed to war and plunder; but, after the union of the crowns, and more especially of the nations, betook themselves to the arts of peace. There is a tradition that his family was originally of the Highlands, and that the name was Macpherson; and the similarity between this name in Gaelic, and that of Currie, renders the tradition not improbable.

His grandfather, whose name and surname he bore (as he did those of his father), was of Dunse in Teviotdale, and brought up to the

Scottish Church. About the period of the Union he settled in Annandale, being appointed minister of Hoddom. He married Isabella Bell, sister to the Laird of Crowdieknow, and left a handsome landed property behind him. His estate was separated from the family, at the end of the American war, in the person of his eldest son. It is now a beautiful property, extending upwards of two miles on each bank of the Annan, possessed by Lieut.-General Dirom, and its name has been changed from Cleughheads, the family appellation, to Mount Annan.

His father, the second son, adopted the profession of his grandfather, and was educated at the University of Glasgow, of which he was ten years a member. At the end of that period, having been ordained, he was presented to the church of Kirkpatrick-Fleming, in Annandale, on the borders of Dumfries-shire, and about three miles from Gretna, so well known in the history of runaway marriages. He soon after married Jean Boyd, sole child of Mr. Robert Boyd, writer, of Maryholm, near Dumfries, whose widow, on his premature death when this only child was an infant, married the Rev. George Duncan, minister of Lochrutton in Galloway. By her second husband she had several children, one of whom, the Rev. George Duncan, suc-

ceeded his father in his sacred office at Lochrutton. To these excellent relatives, (and especially to their aunt, Miss Christian Duncan,) who were distinguished by warmth of affection, generosity of disposition, and purity of mind, Dr. Currie and his orphan sisters were under great and lasting obligations, when, from the death of both their parents, they were at an early period deprived of these, their natural protectors. Were it right here to consult private feelings, much more might be said on this subject: to say less would be ungrateful and unjust.

Dr. Currie was an only son, and was born at the manse of Kirkpatrick-Fleming, in Annandale, on the 31st of May, 1756. He had seven sisters, four of whom died of consumption, inherited from their mother, and one only of whom now survives. He received the rudiments of his education, under his father's eye, at the parish school of the above-named place, and afterwards at that of Middlebie, in the same county, to which latter parish his father was translated, and of which he continued minister till his death. As a child, although his spirit was fearless and impetuous, and his admiration of military adventure and martial glory enthusiastic*, he was

* Extract from a letter to an intimate friend, dated 19th May 1788. — "What you say respecting imitation is

retiring and thoughtful, fond of study, and preferring a solitary ramble by the river side, or

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partly just. Professed or intentional imitation is generally absurd; but, on the other hand, there is an insensible disposition to imitate those with whom we live, that is one of our instincts, and this it is which renders our associations a matter of such importance. This extends not only to the mechanical actions of our body, but to the intellectual operations of our mind; it influences our judgments, and affects the train of our involuntary thoughts. . . . . When I was a child, a relative of my father's returned home after the peace of 1763. He was an officer in a regiment of Highlanders that had served in America, and had many stories to tell of battle and danger. I used to listen to him with an eagerness that impressed his adventures deep on my mind, and my admiration of his character knew no bounds. In private, I used to imitate his gait, and some of my attempts to catch his manner brought on me the ridicule of the family. . . . . I used, therefore, to go out alone to a heath, not far from my father's, where I indulged myself in every martial exercise of the imagination. There was an unfortunate flock of geese on this heath, that I converted into Frenchmen, and very often charged with fixed bayonet. One day, when I was hot in pursuit of the flying enemy, they took their course over what we call a *peat-breast* (a bank made by casting turf), and I, scorning to be thrown out, sprang after them down a precipice six feet high into a quagmire, where I sank nearly up to my neck. Here I was obliged to cool myself for some time; and, when I got home, I was compelled to tell the whole story by my father, though it cost me a degree of shame and mortification that dwelt many years on my mind. He was alarmed at my extravagance, and put Don Quixote into my hands, which had a good deal of effect upon me, though I never lost, and

among the neighbouring woods, to the ordinary pursuits of childhood. The greater part of his eighth year he spent at Allerbeck, in the family of Mr. Irving, a friend and connection of his father's; and here he appears to have imbibed that taste for natural scenery, the source of so many virtuous enjoyments, and so often allied to the noblest feelings of the heart. The following passage, referring to this period of his life, is from a MS. account of himself, which it is much to be regretted that he did not carry further than a few pages *: — "This place (Allerbeck) is beautifully situated among growing woods on the banks of the Kirtle, my parent

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probably never shall lose, the influence of the early impressions which were made upon my mind."

* This MS. commences in the following impressive manner: — "Jan. 1, 1801. — I have allowed too much of my life to pass away without any register of its progress, although it has not been without incidents that it might be useful to myself to preserve as some kind of record, and which may be interesting to my family to read after I am gone. I have, therefore, procured this book, with a lock and key, for my own sole use and inspection. I mean to make it the record, not merely of my actions, or of the occurrences of my life, but of my feelings, at least occasionally; and I shall speak, or rather write, with as much sincerity and unreserve as it is in the human mind to exercise when it is employed on itself. If, by any accident, any eye but my own should glance over this page, let it be turned away, if I am living:—if I am dead, let it proceed."

stream; and there my taste for the beauties of nature first began to expand, and my memory became first impressed with those rural images, which associate so pleasingly with the recollections of infancy, and serve as a sort of solace under the cares and troubles of after life.

"In the neighbourhood of Allerbeck stands, or stood in those days, the tower of the Blackethouse, a small border fortress belonging to the family of the Bells, and well known in the traditionary records of the border wars. It was uninhabited, at least by mortal beings, being partly in ruins; but was the residence of a bogle or brownie, a spirit well known in the history of Scottish superstitions, of whom many adventures were related. About half a mile or less above the house of Allerbeck, the river Kirtle has on its east bank a small and beautiful, but sequestered holm, the bank immediately opposite rising to a considerable height, and at that time covered with a thick wood. On the top of this bank stood the tower of the Blackethouse, the residence of this demon. On the summer's evening I have sometimes lingered in the holm, gazing on the ruins of the tower above, in the expectation of seeing this aërial being; but though he was active in those days, and had appeared to many persons, I never had

a glimpse of him: — I heard him indeed, or was told I heard him, at times, felling timber, or seeming to do so, on the opposite bank in the night; and, though nothing seemed more distinct than the sound of the woodman's axe, and the crash of the falling trees, yet it was said the whole was delusion, for that in the morning no injury could be found. There were those, indeed, who held that these sounds were occasioned by real depredators on the wood, who carried off their plunder in the night, and who encouraged the belief of the noise being preternatural to prevent their robberies from being interrupted at the time, or particularly enquired into afterwards. The landlord was at a distance, and the tenants themselves were suspected to have a share in the plunder.

"When I cast my eye on this scenery, in the summer of 1804, I could no longer discern the ruins of the tower, and the bogle was said to have been long silent. I wondered at this, but ceased to wonder when I recollected that forty years had elapsed since the time of which I have spoken — forty years prolific of every sort of change!

"These and other similar incidents made me early acquainted with the superstitions of the Scottish borders, — a subject in which I have

always felt some interest, and which has been so amusingly treated by Mr. Walter Scott."

Dr. Currie remained until 1769, in which year he lost his mother, at the parish school of Middlebie, under different teachers, enjoying at the same time the advantage of his father's instructions, who was not only a minister of religion, distinguished for his exemplary and unaffected piety, but an excellent scholar, and a man of extensive reading and much general information. While there, he made considerable progress in classical knowledge, having read more or less of most of the Latin classics, and having begun Greek. During his mother's last illness he had been removed from his father's house, and placed under the care of Dr. Chapman, who at that time conducted the grammar school at Dumfries with reputation and success, and who was afterwards known as the author of a system of education, which met with a favourable reception from the public. The account of her death arrived at Dumfries on the day of the annual examination of the school, and was unintentionally communicated to him at the moment he was about to pronounce an oration before the Presbytery and Magistrates. For doing this, it naturally disqualified him. A few days after, he followed her as chief mourner to the grave, his

father being at the time confined by illness. This event occurred when he was thirteen years old. He remained in the house of Dr. Chapman some time after he had finished his course in the school, studying mathematics and some parts of practical geometry. Of his companions at this school, one only now survives, — Alexander Young, Esq. of Edinburgh, who, in a recent letter to the editor, says, — " I am now the only survivor of four most intimate friends at Dumfries school and Edinburgh College. With Dr. William Charles Wells, Dr. George Bell, and myself, your father was always the greatest favourite: all the rest of us were somewhat precipitate and pugnacious, but your father was the peace-maker, and the great cement of our mutual friendship, till he went to America; and most sincerely did I rejoice when he returned, and found his old friends at this University, where he soon surpassed us all, and became again the bond of peace and mutual union amongst us. My intimacy with and sincere regard and affection for him remained undiminished till the day of his death."

When he was about the age of fifteen, he accompanied his father in one of his occasional visits to his friends in Glasgow, with which city the latter had maintained some connection; and,

while there, he caught the spirit of enterprise common amongst his young countrymen. His original destination was the profession of medicine; but his father was induced to yield to his desire of going out to America in the service of some merchants, one of whom had been formerly his pupil, and had repeatedly urged him to intrust his son to his charge, with ample promises, never fulfilled, of taking on himself the care of his future fortunes. He accordingly embarked for Virginia in 1771; and, on his arrival, was established at Cabin Point, a small settlement on James River.

This important step had a striking effect upon the formation of his future character. The period when it was taken was pregnant with mighty events, which called into action and improved every faculty of his youthful mind. Separated from his friends,—deriving no advantages from the character and dispositions, or society of the individuals to whose charge he was at that early age intrusted, — exposed at times to disappointments and difficulty, and even danger, — and thrown into situations where he was compelled to act for himself, unassisted by the counsel or experience of others, — his knowledge of mankind was speedily extended, his judgment matured, his power of decision

strengthened, and his habit of self-command acquired.

Soon after his arrival in Virginia, he caught the intermittent fever common to the country, which brought him to the brink of the grave; and, during his residence there, he had repeated attacks of illness, severe in degree and tedious in duration. His situation proved, indeed, by no means such as his youthful expectations had anticipated: he was exposed to a noxious climate, his employment was uncongenial to his taste, and his hopes of advancement were, to all appearance, not likely soon to be realised.

When he had been two years in America, his father died, leaving a large family but ill provided for. The anxiety which his own situation inspired was, by this distressing event, now transferred to others, for whom his tenderest interest was awakened, and whom to place in a state of independence was the great object of his wishes. On this occasion he wrote the following letter to one of his surviving relatives in Dumfries-shire: —

"*To Miss Christian Duncan.*

"Cabin Point, May 22. 1774.

"My dear Aunt,

"The concern you express for me, on my

hearing of the melancholy news, is of a piece with the whole of your behaviour, — too much for my gratitude. Oh, my dear, my kind aunt! I shall never be able to make you sensible of the feelings of my heart. You have ever been and are now so friendly, so affectionate, and yet so disinterested in your behaviour, that, though it is impossible for a breast possessed of the smallest spark of gratitude, not to endeavour to express its feelings, yet I know you receive rather pain than pleasure from it on your own account. Your motive, indeed, is of a superior kind, and your reward will be of a superior nature to any thing this world can afford. Excuse me, my dear aunt, for saying this much; I will not for the future, if I can help it, trouble you with any more professions.

"My feelings on receiving the afflicting intelligence were such as the most affectionate son must naturally experience on the loss of the best, the kindest, the tenderest of fathers. That his life was such as he could review with pleasure when he came to die (his constant prayer), — that he left this world with a firm trust in Providence for the care of his tender children, — and that he is now in possession of that happiness which is mixed with no alloy, are certainly the noblest of all consolations.

"I hope I shall never forget his anxiety for my welfare during his whole life, and especially during his latter moments. Oh, my dear aunt, how afflicting your account of it! I shall certainly be inexcusable, if I forget that the tenderest of all parents showed the bright example of fortitude, piety, and resignation to the Divine will, through the whole of a long and severe trial; and that, when it pleased God to release him from all his pains, he left upon me the charge of my sisters. I need not tell you, my dear aunt, that (as far as God puts it in my power) I shall be true to the trust reposed in me. It is the height of my ambition to render them independent of the favours of every person. I dare say there is a good deal of pride in this declaration: the proudest spirit must submit to the decrees of Providence, and ought to do so with resignation. One day it may please God to gratify the first wish of my heart; and if he should, in his providence, see fit to order it otherwise, we must be silent. In the mean time, I must inform you that I disclaim every thing left me by my father's will. God forbid that I should take any thing from those whom it is my duty, as well as inclination, to comfort and assist. Upon reflection, it must have been my father's intention that I should have it in trust

for them, as I might be likely, one day or other, to lay out the sum to my sisters' advantage. But you know that I have two years and a half still to serve; and, if I had a large capital at my own disposal, I could not do any thing in that time. Perhaps when my time is out, Mr. —— may do something for me; though I have already seen enough of the world not to be too sanguine in my expectations from the warmest professions of friendship.

"Remember me in the tenderest manner to my dear sisters; and believe me to be, &c. &c.

"JAMES CURRIE."

In the MS. already quoted, he speaks of his parents as follows: — "My father and mother were both superior persons, of great benevolence and singular purity of mind. They were both of that generous and open disposition which enjoys and attracts society, and neither of them much skilled in that precise economy requisite for persons of such dispositions, with a large family and a contracted income. My father had spent his patrimony on his education; but he was not wholly dependent on the emolument of his profession. My mother had brought him what was considered, in those days, a handsome property, — 2000*l.*; but even with this

advantage, the latter period of his life was somewhat clouded by anxiety for the provision of his children. Though a man of singular temperance and moderation in all respects, he became a victim of the gout, which he derived from his ancestors, and which appearing annually in a regular form for a considerable period, became a regular atonic in his forty-ninth year, and continued so for the last nine years of his life. During this time, his winters were a continued scene of disease, and his summers, of imperfect health. Various remedies were prescribed for him, and he tried the waters of Bath and Buxton with little effect. My father had by nature, as I have already described, great tenderness of heart, and, joined to this, considerable cheerfulness of temper. He was fortunate in attaching his family and friends to him in a wonderful degree, and derived from this source every consolation which sympathy and affection can bestow. These, doubtless, assisted him to support his long-continued suffering with exemplary fortitude and resignation. Perhaps my excellent mother's health suffered by her attentions to my father: she was of a delicate constitution by nature, and for some time threatened with consumption, to which she at length fell a victim in her forty-third year. In

my father's house we had very good society: after a pretty extensive acquaintance with the world, I scarcely found any domestic circle better calculated to cultivate the affections, and not many where the powers of the understanding had fairer play."

Notwithstanding the adverse circumstances already stated, Mr. Currie discharged his duty to his employers with undiminished attention, thus acquiring their confidence and approbation; and, in more tranquil times, he might have pursued the mercantile profession with success. Habit had reconciled him to a spot where he had now made many friends, in whose society he was comparatively happy; and it appears that he was likely to form some connection in business, which held out the prospect of great advantage. But the storm approached, which was, in its course, to destroy the ordinary pursuits of life, and to render the colony an overwhelming scene of tumult and agitation, in the midst of which commercial success was remote, if not hopeless, and neutrality of conduct was impossible.

It will easily be imagined that the commencement of the momentous contest which embroiled Great Britain with her colonies, did not take place without making a deep impression on his mind, and exciting his feelings in a strong degree.

His letters during this period evince the light in which he contemplated the impending struggle. A few extracts from them follow, which may, perhaps, after the lapse of more than fifty years, be perused with interest: they show the sagacity of his expectation as to the main point — the issue of the contest.

Extract from a letter to his aunt, Miss Christian Duncan, dated 14th September, 1774: — "You will by this time have heard of the destruction of the East India Company's tea by the people of Boston, and the measures that have been taken, in consequence of it, by our Government. The affair is likely to turn out of a very serious nature, as the Bostonians seem not at all disposed to make restitution, and the other colonies are resolved to support them. At a meeting of the representatives of this colony in August, it was resolved to allow of no imports after the 1st November, and of no exports after the 1st August next. If this resolution can be carried into execution, it will certainly distress the merchants with you greatly, and particularly the Glasgow merchants. Stores have been breaking up here of late very much; and if this take not a better turn shortly, a great many young lads will be very ill off. Great

numbers are now out of employ, and it is expected there will be more daily. In two years things may, perhaps, wear a less gloomy aspect. I feel not the smallest anxiety on my own account; and I am resolved to make myself as easy as I can, and to put my trust in that Providence which directs all things."

From a letter to the Rev. George Duncan, dated 23d May, 1775: — "As the present unhappy disputes between Great Britain and the colonies have arisen to such a height, that they in some measure interest every individual of both countries, you, perhaps, may wish to know my sentiments regarding them. I will not enter into the merits of these disputes; it is too ample a field for discussion, and I am a very poor judge of matters of the kind. Suffice it to say, that I think administration has been and is undoubtedly much to blame, and that the colonies have certainly carried things to a very extravagant height in consequence of it. But whatever the cause may be, just or unjust, the spirit of enthusiasm is certainly gone forth, and God only knows when it will be laid. The people of this country are bred up to the gun from their infancy; without dispute they are as fine marksmen as any in the universe. The face of the country is entirely covered with woods, conse-

quently excellently fitted for ambuscades, and a single gun can be fired at a body of troops without their being able to discover their enemy. For these, and a number of other reasons, which I have not time to enumerate, I am clearly of opinion that though the colonies may be distressed, they never can be conquered; and that if matters should ever get to that height, it would probably end in the utter ruin of the mother-country.

"The present gloomy situation of affairs renders it impossible for me at present to form any probable scheme for my future subsistence: on my own account, it gives me no great uneasiness. I have the consolation to think that I am young, strong, and healthy; and that, in one way or other, I shall probably get a living. I should have been happy, had it pleased the All-wise Disposer of events to have put it in my power, to make my sisters independent of the world, and to have shown my gratitude where it is so justly due. It is not impossible that such an event should happen; if it should fall out otherwise, I shall endeavour to make myself resigned, satisfied that they are under the protection of Him who is the father of the fatherless. Oh! my dear uncle, what pleasure it would give me to make you all happy! I know well, my dear

Sir, to what straits friendless merit may be reduced. I know well that the warmest, the best of hearts is not always accompanied with the means of gratifying its inclinations. Show me the man who acquires a fortune, and in general I will show you a wretch devoid of every noble sentiment, dead to all sense of shame, who makes money his god, whose face cannot blush, whose heart cannot feel. I am convinced there must be an hereafter, where these seemingly unequal distributions of the good things of this life will be fully compensated, and these apparent mazes in the ways of Providence be fully cleared up."

From a letter to the same, dated Cabin Point, June 1. 1775 : — " The public concerns of this colony are now arrived at a very important crisis. The public magazine having been repeatedly robbed, the Governor thought proper to place some spring guns at the door, which by a secret piece of mechanism fired upon its being opened. On the night of the 2d instant, two persons, having procured a false key, went in as usual to carry off arms, and were wounded by the discharge of the guns, though neither dangerously. In consequence of this affair, which has made an amazing noise, the Governor's life was said to be threatened. Certain it is, that as the town was filled with armed men, among

whom he could no longer reckon himself secure, he decamped with his whole family in the night, and went aboard the Fowey man-of-war. He left a message behind him to the House, which was then and is now sitting, informing them that as he was afraid that some people might work themselves up to such a pitch of daringness as to take away his life, in the defenceless state which they knew him to be in, he had removed to a place of greater safety; that he desired them to continue to despatch the public business with efficacy and attention, and to send him from time to time accounts of their proceedings. The Council and Assembly addressed him in very polite terms, requesting his return, and thanking him for the services he had done the colony on the Indian expedition; to which, I understand, he has returned for answer that, if they will disband their independent companies, open the courts of justice, and enter into a negotiation with Parliament on Lord North's proposition, he will once more fix his residence amongst them; — which is, I believe, the same as if he had refused it in the most peremptory manner. In this critical state are affairs at present: how they may turn out God only knows; but of this I am convinced, that force will never do."

After the most feeling expressions of gratitude to his relatives, for some proofs of their affectionate remembrance which he had just received, he adds: — "The thoughts of being in some measure a tax on persons, whom I ought rather to succour and assist, imbitters my social moments, and ruins my peace of mind. Sometimes a fit of thoughtfulness seizes me; and when I look round, and find myself under eternal obligations in all quarters, which it will be impossible for me ever to discharge, and which I have little prospect of even being able to acknowledge, my sensibility is so extremely hurt, that I could wish (were it not for some small hopes which yet remain of being of some service) that God Almighty had placed me a savage in the wilds of Africa." And speaking of one of his sisters, he says, — "Tell her, that notwithstanding the Doctor's assertion that I was too sentimental ever to be clever, I hope to convince him, her, and every body else of their mistake. I hope to show the world that though I may not succeed in it as some have done, it shall not be owing to any blemish in my character, or, I hope, defect in my abilities; and that whatever misfortunes I may go through, I will endeavour to behave under them with becoming

fortitude, and to maintain the character of an honest man."

From a letter to Miss Christian Duncan, dated Cabin Point, 1st September, 1775: — "As this, in all probability, may be the last opportunity I shall have for some time of conversing with my dearest connections, I eagerly embrace it to address my dear aunt, to inform her of my welfare, in which I know she takes an interest, and once more to pour out the acknowledgments of a grateful heart for favours, for which it hath gratitude alone to return. Since writing to my uncle by the Brayton, nothing material has occurred respecting myself; my situation is as agreeable as can well be expected in this seat of tumult and disorder, and my prospects are as poor. I have enjoyed my health perfectly, and really have been happy enough, every thing considered. Till of late, the situation of the times had no visible effect on the spirits of the people of Cabin Point or its environs. Diversions were as common as ever — the present was enjoyed, and the future despised. But now the scene is changed, — the nearer approach of the horrors of a civil war (more particularly dreadful to my countrymen in their critical situation) has thrown a gloom upon every face, and cast a damp upon all our enjoy-

ments. This colony exhibits at present a surprising scene of uproar and confusion — all law or government is in a manner abolished, except the law of force, which, I believe, will soon be the universally established law of the land. How it may end God alone knows; I pretend not to conjecture, but of this I am well satisfied in my own mind, — that the British ministry must give way, if ever matters are again accommodated. Our news from the North are inconsistent and various, though we have but one side of the affair. General Gage undoubtedly gave the Bostonians a severe blow at Bunker's Hill; but it has been productive of nothing. He is equally blocked up as ever, and while his troops have mouldered away by disease, the enemy's have increased in a three-fold proportion; in short, the sword will never do. The flame of liberty blazes in a high degree in this colony, and has been productive of many irregularities, — men of zeal without knowledge seldom know where to stop, and acts of cruelty and oppression have been exercised on some of my countrymen, which are a disgrace to the noblest of causes.* With regard to the merits of the pre-

* It appears that the Scottish residents in the colony were placed in a painful and embarrassing situation, and exposed to much obloquy and reproach. To vindicate

sent contest, I am at a loss what to say. My opinion varies almost every two days, and my reason is bewildered amongst the number of arguments used on both sides the question. In my last to my uncle, I mentioned the test proposed in our House of Representatives to be put to all our countrymen: it was lately rejected by a great majority. I have nothing farther to mention with regard to myself, except that the last year of my apprenticeship is likely to be a very idle one: I am extremely sorry for it. Though idleness may be agreeable to the indolence of my constitution, it has no charms for my reason; because I am highly sensible that it must be destructive to a young fellow in my situation; and I now declare, that I would much rather do business for nothing, than, by doing nothing, waste my time and impair my faculties.

"I have heard nothing relative to any of you since your last, mentioning that you had taken a house and were preparing to remove into Edinburgh. You know well, my dear aunt, how

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them from these attacks, Mr. Currie published a letter in *Pinckney's Gazette*, which made much noise, and which is an uncommon production for a youth of eighteen. It was the first printed piece which he wrote.

eager I must be to learn every circumstance relative to your situation at this critical period, and how sensibly I must feel a disappointment. If I do not receive letters by next post, I shall despair of hearing further from any of my friends till harmony is once more restored between the parent country and her children. I shall not remove from Cabin Point, unless something unforeseen should fall out, till my apprenticeship is out: I hope that matters will be so far settled by that time, as that the communication between the two countries may be open; and if, in the mean time, any opportunity should offer of conveying intelligence across the Atlantic, you may depend on my embracing it.

"To the protection of the Supreme Being, my dear aunt, I sincerely recommend you. In return for the numberless obligations I lie under, I have nothing to offer but the empty professions and acknowledgments of a grateful heart, highly sensible of them all, and my sincere prayers that that Being may repay you, who alone can. Farewell, my dear sisters. God Almighty bless you all!"

Although he regarded the noble spectacle of an infant nation starting forth into independence

with that strong interest which is congenial to every generous breast, the youthful attachments and prejudices of Mr. Currie, as he writes, were entirely British. He disapproved, however, strongly of the arbitrary measures of the Earl of Dunmore, the governor of the colony, and at this time began to entertain the serious idea of quitting America, since all expectation of independence through the paths of commerce seemed at an end, and since neither his feelings nor his judgment would allow him to take any part in the existing differences.

At the beginning of these troubles, he had gone to reside with a near relation, Dr. James Currie, the principal physician in the neighbouring city of Richmond; and, while staying with him, he determined to change his line of life, and to adopt the profession of medicine, for which, as already stated, he was originally destined. It was in consequence fixed that he should embark for Great Britain by the first opportunity, pursue his studies in Edinburgh, and, after graduating, return to practise medicine in the capital of Virginia, when the termination of the war should admit of his doing so. This resolution, previous to its being carried into effect, was the cause of involving him in multiplied difficulties, and of putting his life into

danger; but in the most critical situations he displayed that judgment and decision which began to mark his character, and for which it was conspicuous in after life.

The circumstances attending his departure from America are given in a letter to the Reverend G. Duncan, written after his return to Scotland; and from this letter the following narrative is derived. — After observing that, in respect to health, society, and prospects, his situation in Virginia had latterly been extremely agreeable, he adds that, previous to his departure, "tyranny and discord had begun to rage uncontrolled throughout the colony, and made it impossible for a man who, like him, was strongly attached to his native country, and who spurned the idea of being prescribed to by a lawless multitude, to live in Virginia with any tolerable degree of happiness or security." Accordingly, in the spring of the year 1776, with about forty other young men similarly situated, he petitioned the Convention of the colony for leave to return to Great Britain. Permission was obtained; and, under this sanction, they took their passage for Greenock, in a vessel entirely freighted with passengers, embarking with the pleasing prospect of bidding adieu to a country convulsed with civil distraction, and where

trade of every kind was entirely annihilated. But on the third day of their embarkation, before they had cleared the land, an armed vessel, fitted out for the purpose, seized their ship by order of General Lee and the Convention, without assigning any reason, or exhibiting any charge. In this emergency Mr. Currie was deputed by his companions to wait on the Convention, and ascertain the reason of their conduct. It was with some difficulty that he was allowed to leave the vessel; and a few minutes after his departure, strict orders arrived to put all the passengers into close confinement, and to carry the vessel back to the port from which she had sailed. In the mean time he arrived at Williamsburgh, wrote a pretty bold remonstrance, and delivered it to one of the members, a particular friend, to be laid before the House. This friend, however, previously insisted on making such alterations and additions as would have made the whole "a spaniel-like performance," repugnant to the spirit of the writer, and unworthy of those whom he represented. He therefore resolved to present no petition, especially as he discovered that the treatment, which they had experienced, was the effect of some groundless plot hatched against them. On his return, he found his companions still close

prisoners, their clothes, letters, and effects seized by a party of soldiers, and a court of inquest examining their papers. His own chest, which he had left at a gentleman's house on the banks of the river, had been seized by a party of military despatched for the purpose; and, as he states, "every thing foreboded instant ruin." After various struggles, the whole party were at last turned adrift, to range the forests. Mr. Currie returned to his former place of residence, where he remained, unsettled in purpose, for some months, during which time he was drafted to go to New York as a soldier. An attempt proving abortive which he made to join Lord Dunmore, he was obliged to furnish a substitute, completely equipped in all respects, with ten pounds in money in his pocket. He thought that he should now have been for some time excused; but it was the policy of the Americans at that time to allow no person attached to Great Britain to enjoy the smallest degree of quiet. He was again drafted, and this, joined to an accident which endangered his life, induced him to endeavour to extricate himself from his disagreeable situation. He therefore acceded to a proposal made to him, by one of his young friends, to be his companion in an excursion to North Carolina, parting with re-

luctance from his friends at Cabin Point, who were endeared to him by intimacy and kindness. This companion, having a partner who had openly espoused the side of Lord Dunmore, could not appear as the principal in a shipment of property which he was desirous of making to the West Indies, as it was, on that account, liable to confiscation. The transaction was, in consequence, committed to Mr. Currie's charge, who loaded a vessel, and was about to set out in her for Martinique, with permission of the County Committee, when an order of Congress appeared, prohibiting the exportation of staves, of which the cargo partly consisted. The vessel was unloaded, other articles were put on board, and, provided with the necessary clearance, she again sailed; but at the mouth of Albemarle Sound, where she was two days detained by contrary winds, she was a second time stopped by a privateer that lay there, and seized by orders from the Convention. After much ill treatment, Mr. Currie at last obtained permission to wait on that body, in order to ascertain what fault he had committed, and what were their intentions. He hired an open boat, and set out for Edenton, a distance of 150 miles, leaving the ship in the hands of a lawless banditti. The passage occupied four days — it was the month of August —

the heat was excessive. There was no shelter from the sun's rays, and, on his arrival, his face and hands were completely blistered. He waited on the Commissioners (a body of the Convention), and in strong colours represented the hardship and injustice which he had experienced. Before receiving an answer, he was seized with a violent fever, brought on by fatigue and anxiety; and, when he recovered, was told that an information had been laid that he was carrying out provisions for Lord Dunmore, instead of the cargo which he had reported; that he had a large quantity of specie on board; and that, unless he would order up the vessel to Nixonton, there have her cargo unloaded and inspected, and afterwards give bond, with two approved securities, under the penalty of 2500 dollars, to carry the vessel and cargo to some foreign island in the West Indies, they would confiscate the property, and detain him prisoner. Here he observes, "When you are informed that every article of this charge was infamously false, you will, perhaps, be at a loss to account for the unprovoked malice of a set of men against a young fellow, unknown, friendless, and unprotected. But when you again reflect on the detestable effects which fanaticism and enthusiasm produce on the human mind, your surprise will cease."

He complied with the conditions prescribed; but, purposely to oppress him, his securities were refused; when, at last, one of the Convention, more generous than the rest, "despising the narrow distinctions of country or party," and ashamed of his colleagues, offered himself as the security. Him they could not refuse; and their unfortunate prisoner thus at length escaped from their hands. On the point of sailing, he was attacked by dysentery, but recovered: he then once more embarked. In her progress down the river the ship came to an anchor, and he fell overboard when springing into a boat to go on shore, but was caught by the leg by one of the seamen, and saved. At the mouth of the Sound, the vessel parted from her cable in a tremendous gale, and struck on the shoals, where the wrecks of twenty vessels stared them in the face and threatened instant death; but she was at length providentially got off. After a voyage of nearly six weeks, they finally arrived at St. Eustatia: and in this manner did Dr. Currie, at the age of twenty, quit the shores of America! His journal of the voyage is preserved; and as it contains passages illustrative of his character, a few of these are here introduced.

Extracts from Journal.

"*Friday, September 20th,* 1776. — Towards night, came to an anchor on the Croaton shore, after beating down the Sound all day. Employed myself in reading the tragedy of Douglas, which I had often before read and admired; and in playing at draughts. One passage in this tragedy particularly struck me; it is part of the speech of Lady Randolph to her husband, and appears to be an indirect encomium on the Union: —

'Gallant in strife and noble in their ire,
The battle is their pastime. They go forth
Gay in the morning, as to summer's sport; —
When ev'ning comes, the glory of the morn,
The youthful warrior, is a clod of clay.
Thus fall the prime of either hapless land,
And such the fruit of Scotch and English wars.'

I slept this night on deck in the mainsail, and do not recollect that I ever rested better in my life. I lay and gazed at the moon and stars, which shone with uncommon splendour over my head. I enjoyed the beauty of the scene: I recollected some charming lines of Addison, very applicable to my situation. My imagination was on the wing, and my thoughts were raised far above the low cares of this world,

when balmy sleep closed my eyes, and the morning's sun found me a mere mortal.

"*Saturday, September 21st.* — Towards evening I recollected that this was the anniversary of my arrival in America; being the very day of the month in which the ship Cochrane, five years ago, cast anchor in Hampton Road. This brought on a long train of thought; I reviewed my five years' servitude, and found, as I thought, the good and ill pretty exactly balanced. On the one hand, I remembered the many gloomy hours I had passed, when labouring under the effects of pain and sickness; — I remembered the hard usage and numberless mortifications I had undergone during the first part of my apprenticeship, and the misfortune I had of living with a man, from whom nothing could be learned that belonged either to the man of business or the gentleman; — and I did not forget that when I was on the point of being highly promoted, and of obtaining an establishment, perhaps for life, my hopes had been blasted, and I was again thrown on the wide world to buffet against the stream. On the other hand, I found that my first misfortunes had, perhaps, hardened me to the sense of future ones. I found, upon the whole, that my situation had been much more agreeable than that of other young fellows in my

way;—that I had the happiness of living in a place famed for its politeness, where I had kept the first company—where I had enjoyed numberless scenes of innocent mirth and festivity—and where I had formed connections, which ought to have been of service to me at the time, and the memory of which would give me pleasure while life lasted. I also reflected that I was happy enough to have my conduct highly approved of by my employers,—that, though my schemes had been frustrated, yet no prudence of mine could have prevented it; and though I had many things to blame myself for, yet, upon the whole, the reflections of my own mind were not very severe.

"*Friday, October 4th*, 1776.—A charming evening—slept below till midnight; when I got up, went on deck, wrapped myself up in my cloak, and lay on the hen-coop till morning.—A beautiful night: the moon shone with borrowed majesty; the twinkling stars rolled round their circles; not a breath of wind disturbed the deep serene, not a single shade overcast the splendid picture; towards the verge of the horizon only, there appeared a few dusky clouds of an uncommon figure, which, being tinged by the rays of the moon, assumed the form of distant mountains, and added beauty and so-

lemnity to the awful scene. Such a night scene is extremely agreeable to me, and particularly when I am in a romantic, melancholy humour; I then enjoy it in full perfection; — it is a pleasure which will bear reflection, which costs nothing, and which helps to sweeten the cares incident to humanity.

"*Wednesday, October 9th.* — Read Gulliver's Travels; — Swift's misanthropy intolerable.

"*Friday, October 11th.* — I remember, when I lived at Cabin Point, and business was so brisk that I had not a moment of spare time, I used to think I should never be weary of idleness, and envy their happiness who had it in their power to spend their lives in ease and repose: but either I was mistaken at that time, or my nature must be strangely altered; for I find that any employment in my present situation (even the committing foolish remarks to paper) is more agreeable than none.

"*Wednesday, October 16th.* — Continued my perusal of the Bible; read the second book of Samuel. After dinner, wrote a critique on Pope's universal prayer, to fill up a vacant hour; this took up three folio pages — the reflections on Jonathan's history as much: I folded both and endorsed them, without being at the pains to correct or revise them. Though in this rude

state, they may perhaps serve to amuse me on some future occasion, and will show how I spent my leisure hours.

"*Thursday, October 24th.* — After breakfast, read over what few letters of my numerous correspondents I had been able to preserve. Paid particular attention to my father's eight letters, — admired the elegance of the diction, the beauty and tenderness of the sentiments, the excellence of the precepts, and the spirit of paternal regard and of true piety, which run through the whole. The subjects of these letters necessarily recalled a number of tender and endearing ideas. I reflected how unworthy I was of such a father; on the small use I had made of his advice or example; on the great advantages I had enjoyed; and on the many opportunities of improvement by his society which I had lost, and which must never more return. These reflections were truly gloomy and melancholy. The virtues of my exalted father seemed to rise up in judgment against me, and to reproach me for my own unworthiness. I then read the particulars of his death, as pathetically described in my aunt's letter, which affected me not a little, and brought on a long train of obvious reflections, pleasing though painful."

Immediately after his arrival at St. Eustatia, he went up to Antigua; disposed of his cargo to the admiral on the station, and, abandoning for some time the intention of proceeding to Great Britain, engaged himself in the service of a mercantile establishment there. Having done this, he returned to the former island in order to deliver the cargo; but here a new disappointment awaited him. The admiral refused to make good his bargain, on the ground that he could buy the articles which he had purchased, cheaper elsewhere. Mr. Currie therefore sold the vessel and cargo to other persons. After this he was attacked by a violent fever, which fell on his nerves, and rendered him paralytic. When convalescent he repaired to Antigua, but found himself again thrown on the world, as the house with whom he had entered into the engagement, had failed and dissolved its partnership. For some time he remained in the island, unresolved what to do, but strongly advised to return to some cold climate for the recovery of his health. At last an offer was made to him by some resident merchants, of fifty guineas in hand, with a promised gratuity of one hundred guineas more, to carry despatches to government, and make some remonstrances on the conduct of Admiral Y——; the latter amount only to be

paid in the event of success. This proposal he accepted; and in February, 1777, sailed for London with convoy, touching at several islands in the way — viz., Montserrat, Nevis, and St. Kitts.

"St. Kitts (he says in his journal) exceeds all the West Indies in the fertility, beauty, and verdure of its soil. I never in my life saw any country comparable to it. The land rises behind the town gradually into lofty mountains, the tops of which are inaccessible. The sides of these hills are intersected by amazingly deep and romantic valleys, down which the cataracts rush with astonishing rapidity. The whole is cultivated as far as is possible for human industry to do it. The enclosures are surrounded with orange, lemon, lime, and cocoa trees, and the summits of the mountains and sides of the valleys are covered with the same blooming evergreens. Upon the whole, the beauty and grandeur of this charming scene, added to the extensive prospect of the circumfluent ocean, 'beggar all description.'"*

* On this voyage he employed himself in translating Letters on the People of England from the French, in reading Temple's History of England, and sometimes in re-perusing Shakspeare, Pope, and Churchill's Works.

But misfortune still attended his progress; — violent tempests, accompanied by thunder and lightning, ensued after his leaving the West Indies; and the vessel reached Fayal, one of the Azores, in a sinking condition. Here she was detained for some time by the repairs that she required; and, in this interval, the salubrious climate, pure mountain air, and diversions of shooting and fishing, perfectly restored his health.

Extract from Journal.

"*Thursday, April 3d.* — Went into the country shooting, — had excellent sport, the game being exceedingly plenty. The land appeared to us extremely rich, and was cultivated to the utmost extent. The enclosures are small, and the fences built of stone and very high. Where the land is not cultivated in grain, it is disposed in orange and lemon groves, and in vineyards. These serve greatly to beautify the prospect, and diffuse fragrancy over the happy soil. Except the island of St. Kitts in the West Indies, I never saw any country comparable to Fayal. These islands are also peculiarly blessed in a serene sky and healthful climate: the heat in summer is always alleviated by continual breezes from the sea, and the cold in winter is never in

any degree severe. They know nothing of extremes; they never feel the fierce east wind of Europe, or north-west of America:—from their detached and insular situation, every gale that blows is softened, every breeze is balmy. In consequence of this happy temperature of the air, and fertility of the soil, these islands are extremely populous, and their inhabitants live to a great age."

At length, after a tempestuous voyage, in which, during the night, the vessel most narrowly escaped running upon the rocks to the northward of the Scilly Isles, on which, with six ships of war, Sir Cloudesley Shovel perished in 1707, and where she must also have inevitably been dashed to pieces, they reached Deptford on the 2d of May, 1777. But on his arrival in London, he had the mortification to find that, owing to their unavoidable delay at Fayal, the duplicates of those despatches of which he was the bearer, had arrived before him; by which circumstance he lost the promised hundred guineas. He remained a few weeks in the metropolis; and then joined his aunt and sisters in Edinburgh, just as he had reached the age of twenty-one.

It is surely difficult to read this narrative of the earlier years of an unknown Scottish youth,

without having our sympathy powerfully awakened; and it may not be without its edification to those yet at the outset of life, who will contrast the hardships that he suffered during this period, with the celebrity and honoured station in literature and science, which he afterwards attained.

From the time of his arrival in Edinburgh, until he took his degree, Mr. Currie was, with few intervals, a constant resident at the University. In the winter following he entered on the study of medicine, to which his application was ardent and unremitting, although unfortunately interrupted for a time in the spring of 1778 by a severe rheumatic fever. Every hour not passed at the classes, or in attendance on the hospitals, was given to study and mental improvement. He became a member of the Medical Society, before which he read (amongst other pieces exhibiting strong marks of ability and acute observation) two separate papers on the effects of cold on the living body in health, its operation as inducing disease, and its influence as a remedy; by which he acquired considerable credit, and which prove that his attention was early directed to the subject of his subsequent work — the "Medical Reports." He was also an active member of the Physical

Society and of the Speculative Society, where his reputation for talents and eloquence as a speaker long survived his departure from college. His indefatigable industry as a medical student attracted the notice of the different professors; and amongst these, he was distinguished by the flattering kindness of the illustrious Dr. Cullen.*

* To this great man he some years afterwards paid the following testimony of respect and admiration, in his Review of Darwin's Zoonomia.

"With more comprehensive views (than Sauvages), a more lucid order, of a happier simplicity, he divided the whole body of diseases into four classes of twenty orders. In his definitions he excels in accuracy all who have gone before him; and it is, indeed, his distinguished and peculiar praise, that not only in his Nosology, but in his First Lines, his descriptions of diseases receive no colouring from his theories, but are every where faithful to nature. Original and inventive, Dr. Cullen, in his reasonings and explanations, dwelt much on the causes of diseases. Aware, however, of the imperfection of the art, he did not attempt to arrange them according to their proximate causes (as it was his wish to have done), but according to an humbler method, — founded partly on their symptoms, partly on their causes, and partly on their seats. The Nosology of Dr. Cullen had not the attention or the praise it merits. The elder class of physicians were not likely to receive a new system from their contemporary; and the attention of the rising generation has been too soon withdrawn from this as well as the other works of this accurate observer, by the bold and specious, but presumptuous and sometimes dangerous speculations of his pupil, Dr. Brown. The "Systema

Notwithstanding his close attention to the more immediate object of his studies, he succeeded, during this period of his life, in cultivating his taste for general literature, and gained an intimate knowledge of the best poets and historians in his own language. He has left behind him some letters, written to a young friend, containing directions for a course of reading, which form an able criticism on our most distinguished writers. He applied himself also, with peculiar interest, to metaphysical studies, and became deeply versed in the theories of Berkeley, Locke, Hume, and Reid; and, for some years, the philosophy of the human mind was a favourite subject for the exercise of his mental powers. At a subsequent period, in the midst of active professional engagements, he wrote a review of Dr. Reid's celebrated work on the active powers of man, which appeared in the Analytical Review. This critique has been considered as displaying a profound knowledge, and

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Nosologicum" of Dr. Cullen is, in the judgment of the writer of this article, his most masterly production, and, indeed, the finest synopsis of the history of disease that has hitherto issued from the press."—English Review (Zoonomia, or the Laws of Organic Life), p. 537. London, 1796.—See also Dr. Currie's letter to Dr. Darwin, printed in the present volume.

a singularly clear and just analysis of the various theories on this difficult subject.* He seems too, at this time, to have paid great attention to composition; and the style of his letters and essays exhibits much of the accuracy and ease

* The subjoined passage from this article will show his views as to the unsatisfactory and uncertain nature of speculations on the doctrine of necessity.

Extract from Analytical Review for Nov. 1788. vol. ii. p. 270.—"If philosophers would be contented with the knowledge of the extent of that command over our thoughts and actions, of which every man is conscious, some light might probably be thrown on the subject by an accurate investigation of the phenomena of madness. In the extreme of this deplorable disease, all self-command is lost. Nevertheless a maniac has a will, and has 'the power of doing whatever he wills,' which is all that is admitted to any of us by the strict necessarian. But something more than this belongs to a moral agent, and it is this *something*, which constitutes the subject of debate. The nature of this, *where it is*, might be illustrated by a correct view of the appearances *where it is not*. But this humble inquiry will not satisfy the aspirations of man. He would know the relation which his own mind bears to the system of the universe, and determine the mode of existence that prevails through creation! In a controversy concerning the freedom of the human will, a creature just emerged from the dust, and soon again to mingle with it, presumes to illustrate the faculties of his own understanding, by allusions to those of the Eternal Being, whose force wheeled the planet Saturn in its orbit; whose power has formed other suns and other planets beyond the regions of Saturn; whose skill is manifested in all his works, in the structure of the human frame, and in the harmony of ten thousand worlds!"

of expression, for which his subsequent writings have been admired.

His situation, while a student at the university, was necessarily attended with many privations, and one which required the steady exertion of strong self-denial. His spirits, too, were depressed at times by anxious interest in those dear to him, and by the uncertainty of his own fortunes; but his anxiety did not degenerate into despondence: *he felt* (to use his own words) *a kind of presentiment that he should yet be fortunate;* adding, *that he was solicitous to encourage the idea; that it would bear him up in the mean time, and might, perhaps, contribute to his future success.*

During one of the summer vacations, he paid a visit to the scenes of his childhood and the friends of his youth. While absent from Edinburgh, he corresponded with his aunt, whom he had left behind. He described his welcome in grateful terms; stated that his friends vied with each other in showing him kindness; yet that he had little relish for society, and was often overcome with melancholy. In one of his letters he gives the following account of a visit paid to some friends, who were mourning the loss of a young and beautiful daughter, whose early death seems to have made a deep impression on his

feelings: — "As we approached Dumfries, my heart saddened, as it does now in the relation. Poor J—— was hardly ever from my thoughts. I do not know how to account for it, but I have seldom felt myself more sensibly moved than I was on approaching the house, and, indeed, during the whole evening; — a bitterer sorrow would have been less affecting. A blooming girl sinking under a consumption, at the age of twenty-one, is, in general, and particularly to me, an object sufficiently interesting. When to this are added the goodness of heart, the sweetness of manner, and the strength of judgment, which characterised J——, the feelings are more powerfully affected. The behaviour of the family reflects much honour on their character; it is, indeed, resigned beyond any thing I could have expected. Much of this is to be ascribed to their piety, and their cheering hopes of a better life; something, also, to the long and hopeless illness under which she laboured, by which time was allowed to strengthen their minds against the approaching consummation; or, as it might, perhaps, be otherwise expressed, by which their feelings were so exhausted by the constant reflection on what might happen, that their edge was blunted, and the *bitterness* of death passed before *it* arrived. Such is the foundation of

much of our boasted firmness. The all-wise Disposer of events has decreed that the more frequently our feelings are called out on any particular occasion, the less will be their force. In this way it is, that the mind becomes familiarised and hardened to danger and death, and strengthened under the severest blows that can afflict humanity. Thank Heaven! this is not the only means of attaining resignation. The comforting prospects which are opened beyond the grave strengthen the mind, not by hardening but awakening the feelings, and turning the imagination from brooding over the gloomy reflections, arising from the dissolution of the dearest ties, to the pleasing hope of their speedy and more intimate renewal in a happy futurity, never to be dissolved."

Among his papers I have found the following verses, which were drawn from him on this sad occasion: —

ELEGY.

To this lone spot my devious footsteps led,
Here on the turf my careless limbs repose;
The rude rock hangs stupendous o'er my head,
And at my feet the winding Annan flows.

'Tis silent night, and Cynthia's softened flame
Darts o'er the blue expanse a fainter ray; —

I give the hour to Sorrow's sacred claim,
  And musing Melancholy tunes the lay.

Ah, solemn hour! far hence be noise and strife,
  Nor let rude minstrelsy assail mine ear;
Again I leave the realms of light and life,
  To bend with fancy o'er Ophelia's bier.

With purest taste, with truest judgment blessed,
  With each soft grace that youth and love bestow,
In gentlest modesty her virtues dressed,
  Her spirit raised by genius' sacred glow;

While oft her bosom heaved with pity's sigh,
  And o'er her cheek the mind diffused its bloom,
With all the charms that hope and life supply,
  Ophelia early sought the narrow tomb.

O'er her dear grave see young Narcissa kneels,
  The loved companion of her early years;
The melting sigh now fond remembrance steals,
  Now heaves her breast, and bursts a flood of tears.—

Let the sweet stream of sadness softly flow,
  Blessed be the sorrows that thy mind employ;
Who taste the sacred luxury of woe,
  Contemn the emptiness of earth-born joy.

And see! beyond the grave the prospect rise —
  Let holy rapture mingle with thy tears:
See! virtue triumphs in her native skies,
  And claims the promise of eternal years.

Late the pale moon-beam, quiv'ring o'er the stream,
  Gave trembling lustre to the rolling tide;
Now black'ning clouds obstruct the varying beam —
  Sullen and dark the gloomy waters glide: —

So rolls the tide of life: — on its pale wave
Varying and faint the beams of gladness play;
But, passed the dreary regions of the grave,
It joins the ocean of immortal day!

The period was now approaching, when an effort was to be made for the attainment of that independence which was the first object of his heart, and which, in his peculiar situation, it was most essential for him to acquire. He had finished his medical education with honour and distinction, and was qualified, on graduation, to commence his professional career as a physician. But so keen was his sense of dependence on those near relations, whose generous assistance was ill proportioned to their means, and so strong was his desire to relieve them from expense on his account, that he resolved to embrace the first opportunity which might offer of effecting that object. He accordingly determined to seek a medical appointment in the army; and having procured an introduction to General Sir William Erskine, that officer nominated him to be surgeon's mate in his own regiment, with the rank of ensign. As he was preparing, however, to join the regiment, he heard that it was the intention of Government to form a medical staff in Jamaica; and it was suggested to him that he might succeed in obtaining an

appointment as physician to the expedition. But this expedition was intended to sail, it was understood, in a few weeks, and the stated day for conferring degrees at the University of Edinburgh was some months distant. In this emergency he repaired to Glasgow, where no such impediment existed; and there, after a compliance with the accustomed forms, he received his diploma in April, 1780.

Dr. Currie's next step was to procure all the interest possible in support of his intended application. His life at college had been one of hard study and rigid economy, and his connections consequently did not extend far beyond the domestic circle. But among the professors and students his abilities and general character had procured him many friends, who were active on his behalf; and, provided with their recommendations and best wishes, he set out for London.

Before quitting this part of the narrative, it may be mentioned that, in addition to those youthful companions already named, his great intimates at the University were, the present Lord Glenlee; Mr. David Hume, nephew of the celebrated historian, and now one of the Barons of Exchequer in Scotland; and Dr. Richard Worthington.

On his journey to the metropolis he visited Dumfries-shire, in order to take leave of his friends; and while there, met with a singular incident, of which he has left the following MS. account: —

"One Sunday evening, in the summer of the year 1780, being on a visit to Sir William Maxwell, I was tempted by the fineness of the weather to take a solitary walk. The evening was still, the whole country was silent, and the calmness and serenity of the surrounding objects diffused a pleasing tranquillity over my mind. Leaving the house, I bent my steps towards the Kirtle, whose waters were beautifully irradiated by the beams of the setting sun; and advancing up along its banks in deep meditation, I was insensibly led into the bosom of a thick forest. Pursuing my course, I was struck with the appearance of a churchyard surrounded by very lofty elms, inhabited by a flock of rooks, whose cawing interrupted at times the solitary stillness of the scene. On examination, I could discover the ruins of a church, long gone to decay. After wandering some time among the tombstones, I entered a small chapel, by a flight of stairs, which I found was built over the burial-place of the family of Springkell. I had just light enough to discover the family escutcheon,

which hung on the walls. As I returned towards the door, I heard a very uncommon noise; and when I got to the top of the stairs, I saw a human figure sitting between two graves, covered almost over with long grass, and bending its eye upon me with an expression of countenance that had in it nothing earthly. The complete silence and solitude of the place — the solemnity of the surrounding objects, heightened by the gloom of evening, — conspired with the sudden appearance of the spectre to shake my nerves in every fibre. I stood gazing with astonishment and terror; when this apparition, suddenly springing up with a hideous laugh, assumed the form of a woman half naked, and, bounding lightly over the graves, was soon hid in the surrounding wood. My heart sank with dismay, and it was several minutes before I could recover my recollection. I retraced my way with hurried steps along the river — the fearful vision still present to my imagination — and arrived, breathless and terrified, at the mansion of Springkell. Here I soon discovered that the cause of my affright was a poor unhappy maniac, known by the name of Susanna, who ranged through the country uncontrolled, and was known to take up her nightly residence in the neighbouring woods."

Upon his arrival in London, Dr. Currie found that the influence of Mr. Surgeon-General Adair had procured the situation in question for another young physician of acknowledged merit. Severe as was this disappointment, he determined, in pursuance of his intention upon quitting his friends, to proceed at all events to Jamaica, and endeavour to establish himself in practice in that island, from which he might, if unsuccessful, find many opportunities of passing over to Virginia, and revisiting his relative in Richmond. He took his passage accordingly in the fleet about to sail; but various delays occurred to prevent its departure, and were the cause of his spending a great part of the summer in the metropolis. During this period he extended his acquaintance, and was fortunate enough to be introduced to some individuals of distinction in the literary world (amongst others, to Mr. Burke,) as well as of eminence in his own profession. His abilities were discovered to be of no common order, as he became more known; and his friends began now frequently to express their regret that he should persevere in his intention of settling in Jamaica, declaring their confident opinion that he might succeed better at home, and strongly urging the abandonment of his voyage. The fleet, meanwhile,

was on the point of sailing; and, partly owing to an attack of illness and other accidental causes, and partly from the impression made by these representations, he allowed it to depart without him. Yet these gratifying proofs of the favourable opinion of his friends were too much in unison with his own wishes to be received without some conscious distrust; and it was not till after many internal conflicts, that he resolved to remain in England, and to make an attempt, which the partiality of friendship alone might have suggested or encouraged.

During the suspense which attended his plans, he had communicated to his friends that his intention of going to Jamaica was unchanged; although he could not conceal from them his desire to remain, if possible, in England. He wrote particularly to his near relation, Dr. Currie, of Chester, who had been then some time settled in practice in that city, and who was commencing that eminent and successful professional career, which has so greatly distinguished a long life of activity and usefulness. To his intimate college companion, Dr. Richard Worthington, of Wrexham, he also wrote; and from each of these zealous friends he received a pressing invitation to visit them, accompanied by earnest remonstrances against his going abroad, and by

their opinion that, with a proper opening, his success at home was by no means doubtful. Accepting their invitation, he repaired to Chester; and, on his arrival there, he learned that both Manchester and Liverpool presented favourable prospects for a young physician. After a short visit to the former place, he at once decided upon selecting Liverpool as the field of his practice; and, accompanied by Dr. Currie, for the purpose of being personally introduced to the different friends of the latter, he established himself in that town in October, 1780.

Although at first unknown to a single individual in the place which he had fixed upon as his future residence, his acquaintance soon became very general, owing to the great exertions and kindness of Dr. Currie, which had procured him numerous introductions in the class of society which, as he observes in a letter to his aunt, Miss Duncan, "required that dignity of deportment of which he was so fond," and which compensated, possibly, for the disadvantage of his youth. It does not appear that the society of Liverpool, as it then existed, was congenial to his disposition and turn of mind; for, writing to the same correspondent, a month after his arrival, he describes the men as shy in their manners, with ideas and opinions very different

from those to which his college studies had accustomed him, and unrefined in their tastes and pleasures. "In such societies (he continues) you know I am not qualified to shine; and I am well convinced, that where I take no active share in conversation, it were better for my own reputation that I were absent. Of all society, I most esteem that of men of sound sense and enlarged understandings; and, next to that, I am fond of the company of women."

Accustomed from infancy to disclose to this admirable friend and counsellor his most secret thoughts and feelings, he wrote to her, on the 12th December—"I am pleased with the manner in which you speak of my prospects: your sentiments in this instance, as indeed in almost every other, confirm my own, and support my resolutions. That I shall succeed in the end, if Heaven spare my health and faculties, I think there is little reason to doubt; but that patience and perseverance must be called to my aid, is a truth self-evident. All calculations in my present circumstances must be extremely doubtful; but I venture to indulge myself in the hope that, at the end of five years, I shall be in the habit of receiving 300*l.*, and, at the end of eight years, 500*l.*, per annum. Mr. G. thinks these hopes are *by no means* unreasonable. I shall be able to live with ease,

even as a housekeeper, for 300*l.* a year; so that, in the last case, you see there will be a comfortable surplus for proper purposes. When I write in this manner on a subject so extremely uncertain, you may be sure my heart is entirely open to you: for you know, that where reason offers no consolation to dissipate my gloom as to future prospects, I scorn to call to my aid the fictions of imagination; and, as I have an utter distaste to the indulging *myself* in false hopes, so I have an entire dislike to the communicating of them to others. In the course of my progress, many accidents may occur, that may render my struggle shorter and less severe; and it is not to be denied, that it is in the power of fortune to obstruct, and even to prevent, my success. It shall be my anxious endeavour to secure the approbation of my own mind, by neglecting no means of establishing myself which my judgment may point out; and the rest is in better hands. Yet I would fondly believe, that if to propose no selfish views as the ends of my ambition entitle, in any degree, to the smiles of Heaven, this is a claim which I may prefer.

"No change has happened in my manner of life since I wrote to you last. I am as much in company as ever, and shall continue to be so for some time to come. My spirits are in general

good, and much evener than they have been for several years past; and, if I am not much mistaken, I pass in the house for a very good-natured man. My pride is still unconquerable; and does not, I believe, escape observation. I have made various and repeated attempts to bend it, but it will not do; and I fear that, should I succeed, the fabric on which it is founded, composed of my diffidence, of my honour, and of my sentiments of independence, might likewise crumble into dust. In talking of independence to you, my dearest friend, I feel my cheeks glow, and the tears almost starting from my eyes. You know my situation, — that, besides a variety of weighty obligations, my gratitude is on other accounts mortgaged beyond redemption. But do not think hardly of me, or accuse me in your own mind of meanness; for a hint of that kind will sink me in my own estimation, and, if I once sink there, I fear I shall never again rise."

In March, 1781, an event occurred, promising to be productive of much happiness to Dr. Currie. This was the settlement at Manchester of the friend of his earliest years, Dr. George Bell, a young physician of extraordinary talents and uncommon character, whose name will occur in a subsequent part of this Memoir. It was soon arranged that frequent meetings should

take place between them at Warrington; to which their common friend, Dr. Currie, of Chester, was also occasionally a party; and here they enjoyed that intercourse, which intimacy and similarity of pursuits were calculated to render so attractive. These meetings were continued until interrupted by the untimely death of Dr. Bell.

In the following month Dr. Currie was elected one of the Physicians to the Dispensary; and though his unanimous election, after only six months' residence in Liverpool, is a proof of the zeal and activity of his friends as well as of his own exertions, it must be allowed to be likewise an indication of the growing impression of the public in favour of his medical skill and character. A man endowed with mediocrity of talents might, indeed, succeed against a rival of greater abilities than himself; but it is not likely that such a man would be chosen entirely without opposition.

The anxiety which he felt as to the result of this election (the first step in his profession) was increased by the accounts which he received, during his canvas, of the alarming state of health of his aunt. This excellent woman was, however, spared to her family for a short while longer, as she survived this illness till the following year: and, on her recovery at this time, he wrote to her as follows: —

"April 25th, 1781.

"Heaven be praised that you are again able to write at such length, and to exert your disposition to make me happy with such effect.

"I received your letter at the very moment when I was mounting my horse to meet Dr. Bell at Warrington. Having dipped into it here and there, I thought it would be extravagant to read it all at once, so I stopped at the end of every two miles and read three or four sentences, which furnished me with matter of reflection for two miles more; and in this manner I went on, stopping, and reading, and riding by turns, till I finished the letter at the eighteenth mile-stone, within sight of Warrington. Were it in my power to give you any part of the comment which passed in my mind, I think you would have no reason to be sorry for the effects of your letter. At this distance I have no power to undertake such a task; and if I had, I have now no time to execute it. My heart was warmed in a manner beyond its ordinary feelings; but, at present, I have too great a confusion of ideas to be able to conjure up again those feelings, which were then so delightful, much less to detail them on paper.

"I was more particularly pleased with the description you gave of the state of your mind at the time when you expected daily to step

beyond the limits of time; — I was pleased at it as a Christian, as a philosopher, and as one who loves you with the warmest affection. I have often reflected on the manner in which such an awful prospect must affect every human being, and, with all my boasted strength of mind, have been afraid of shrinking from the trial. Nay, I have doubted whether any human being was able to meet his fate without the severest pangs. I always thought that your behaviour on that event, if my life was prolonged beyond yours, would decide whether it were possible to meet death with perfect calmness and resignation. Thanks be to God! you have been put to the proof, and are alive to tell your resignation and hope.

"I would gladly trust that you will in future be less ready to sacrifice your health to the inclinations, or the supposed wants, of your friends; and that you will remember that those who truly love you, will and ought to sacrifice every private and selfish inclination to the preservation of a life which is so valuable."

A few months after the date of the preceding letter, he writes to the same correspondent, that he does not neglect any proper means of success in the way of his profession; adding, "but I get nothing done in the line of study, and I evidently

see that all my aspirations after literary fame will be in vain."

It may be mentioned as some indication of the state of manners in Liverpool, at this period, that he considered it necessary to become a member of two card clubs, which met on Monday and Thursday evenings. He belonged also to a bowling-green club, which held its meetings on Saturday noon, three miles distant from town, and to a weekly literary society. But, except the last, he attended none of these meetings regularly, being much occupied by the Dispensary, and entering a good deal into general company.

The re-establishment of the Literary Society, which he was the principal means of reviving in a new form, and which held its first meeting at his lodgings, was a source of peculiar pleasure to him; as it gave an impulse to his literary pursuits, and brought him into acquaintance, subsequently ripened into friendship, with men whose names have contributed to confer a character on the town of Liverpool. Mr. Roscoe, Mr. Rathbone, the Rev. John Yates, Professor Smyth (of Cambridge), the Rev. W. Shepherd, and other intelligent and estimable individuals, were members of this Society, at its commencement, or in the course of its duration. On Dr. Currie's election as President, he delivered an address from the chair, on the objects

of such societies, and on the mode of best conducting their proceedings. This address he was requested to publish as a preface to the laws of the Society; and he at first consented to do so, correcting it with that design; but, from diffidence, he afterwards abandoned his intention. In the Appendix * will be found some of the papers read by Dr. Currie to the Society, which will not only give an idea of the subjects that were discussed there, but will be a specimen of the manner in which they were treated and considered by him.

The meetings of the Literary Society were continued for eight or nine years; but some time after the commencement of the French revolution, although it was a rule that no political subject should be discussed, it was thought prudent, owing to the heated state of the public mind produced by that event, that they should cease.

Soon after his establishment in Liverpool, it was Dr. Currie's good fortune to be introduced to the respectable family of Mrs. Cropper, an old lady resident in that town, in whose daughter, arrived at mature years, and, indeed, a good deal older than himself, he found an invaluable friend. Her benevolence was not discouraged

* Vide Appendix, No. 10.

by the reserve of his exterior; her discernment could distinguish the good qualities which it served to veil; and her generous zeal and active exertions were afterwards unceasingly employed to promote his professional success.

Of Miss Cropper he writes to his aunt in the following terms: — "I found it necessary to make her one of your intimate friends, in order that I might have some person to talk with about you; and it would astonish you to see how eager she is to turn the discourse on that subject which she knows is so near my heart, and with what pleasure she listens to the tales of my youth, — sometimes with the tears standing in her eyes. She is attached to my interest as if she had known me from my earliest days; and the enthusiasm with which she undertakes my cause with her friends and acquaintance, who are numerous and respectable, does more honour, I am afraid, to her heart than her judgment. Had you yourself had the choice of a friend for me, that should enliven my hours of languor, that should direct the etiquette of my conduct, that should cherish my taste and soothe all my little distresses, that should enter, as if by intuition, into all the peculiarities of my feelings, and know how to charm the spirit of melancholy, you would infallibly have fixed on this amiable woman, who is the pride and pattern of her sex."

With this excellent person he maintained the strictest friendship to the latest period of her life, — enjoying the gratification of her society when at home, and corresponding with her when she was frequently absent on a visit to her relation, Dr. Percival, of Manchester. He was introduced by her to the acquaintance and friendship of that eminent physician, with whom he kept up a literary as well as professional intercourse for many years.*

Towards the middle of the year 1781 the ravages of the small-pox engaged the attention of the medical profession in Liverpool, who were strongly in favour of a system of general inoculation; and Dr. Currie, who took an active interest in the measure, was appointed to draw up an address to the inhabitants. In the letter to his aunt, which mentions this circumstance, he says, "I am well, thank God, and, on the whole, happier than I had a right to expect. I have now with me two old college companions, and am in daily expectation of Cleghorn from

* The friendly interest of Miss Cropper who died in 1791, was not confined to Dr. Currie; but was extended to the writer of this Memoir in the days of his childhood — and of her judicious kindness, her early instruction and invaluable precepts, at such a period, he retains, after forty years, a lively and grateful remembrance.

Bath, and of Quin from Dublin. As soon as they arrive, I shall despatch a summons for George (Dr. Bell) to Manchester. We shall meet and taste true happiness once more, in spite of the anxieties and cares with which we are individually encompassed. Dr. Duncan met Dr. Bell, Dr. Currie, and myself, at Warrington, on Sunday last. He returned with me to Liverpool. You see I have had, and shall have, many visitors. My friends here think there will never be an end of the doctors that come to see me."

In the midst of professional and other engagements a young physician has many hours of leisure, and it was not probable that Dr. Currie would allow these to pass unimproved. He seems never to have lost sight of his early aspirations after literary distinction, and was accustomed to commit to writing his reflections on the different subjects of his meditations. The internal operations of the mind, to the contemplation of which he had been led by his metaphysical studies at the University, were now the frequent object of his thoughts, and, no doubt, led to that habitual abstraction for which he was in after-life remarkable. On the 20th of October, 1781, he wrote to Dr. Bell as follows: —

"I begin to find that, notwithstanding all my engagements, I have some time left for study, and I have formed a resolution to employ it (if possible) in some way that may contribute to my present happiness and my future fame. There is a part of the philosophy of medicine that has as yet been little attended to; I mean that which treats of the diseases of the mind, of the influence of affections primarily mental, on the corporeal functions, and particularly of the passions and emotions. Something, I am convinced, might be done on this subject. Every author whom I have read, in treating on it, has immediately exclaimed on its great difficulty, and most of them have asserted that it is impossible that we should ever acquire any knowledge on a business so intricate. But though we may never know *how* mind acts on matter, we may, by a careful attention, possibly discover the general principles of this action; which is all, indeed, that we are able to attain in regard to the action of matter on matter. If I ever do any thing to be remembered, it must be on some such subject, for I am utterly unfit for those studies which are at present so fashionable. I despise the pitiful matter-of-fact knowledge, which is busy with the wings of butterflies and phials of mutton broth; and my

contempt is mixed with indignation, when I consider the arrogance and self-conceit to which such employments give birth. But the mind of man is, in my eye, a noble field for speculation. By self-contemplation the intellectual faculties are strengthened, the conceptions are enlarged, the sentiments ennobled, and the soul is prepared for that state where its chief employment is said to be the contemplation of that Being, of which it is the emanation. If you are alone when this meets your eye, and disposed for thought, you will conceive the sensations with which it is written; but if you should be in the coffee-room playing with such fellows as —— and —— at a guinea a point, you will think it mere rant and bombast.

"In regard to myself, I have not much to say: — I get a little practice, but my patients seem to die out of spite. In all my hopes and fears, blessings and disappointments, I shall ever be, with unaltered attachment,

"Yours,
J. C."

It was at this time that he wrote a Dialogue on Melancholy*, hitherto unpublished, which will perhaps be thought not unworthy of the

* Vide Appendix, No. 1.

venerable author of La Roche and Louisa Venoni.* It acquires additional interest from the circumstance that, under the name of Ophelia, the author alluded to the young lady whose death is noticed in a previous letter.

Soon after this, Dr. Currie was elected an honorary member of the Philosophical and Literary Society of Manchester, at the instance, as it appears, of Dr. Bell; and, on this occasion, he sent them a paper on Hypochondriasis†, written while he was at College, and read to the Physical Society of Edinburgh in 1779. On receiving an intimation of the intended honour, he wrote the following letter: —

"Liverpool, November 29th, 1781.

"My dear George,

"In regard to the kind proposal you mention, of making me an honorary member of your Philosophical and Literary Society, if the thing can be done naturally, and without canvassing or trouble on your part, I shall have pleasure in accepting the honour, otherwise you know it is no honour at all. But it seems I must send you some philosophical paper; — for this I confess I am not quite prepared — however, you shall

* See the Mirror. † Vide Appendix, No. 2.

judge. I presume something on Chemistry or Natural Philosophy would have been most acceptable: but I have not by me any thing that I have any opinion of on these subjects; and to write for the occasion is quite out of my power. But you shall have a list. — An Essay on Phlogiston, including the consideration of its reality, its connection with heat and light, its influence on the vegetation of plants, and on the volatility and absolute gravity of bodies. This was thrown together some few months ago, and contains no new facts, but some speculations which might rather be considered as absurd or romantic. An Essay on the different kinds of Attraction, and their connection with each other, written last winter.

"In Chemistry I have really nothing worth mentioning, unless it be some observations on evaporation, which are not deserving of perusal. None of these you have seen. You remember my Essay on National Pride, — it is now rather more complete than when you saw it, and more correct. I could send it without much trouble, if you think it will do.

"Of late I have thought a good deal on the influence of climate, particularly of temperature, on the mind and body of man. I could, with-

out difficulty, throw off something tolerable on this subject; — indeed, I have done something in that way already.

"The best thing I ever wrote is an Essay on Philosophic, or, perhaps, I should rather call it Poetic, Melancholy: it is now, indeed, under my hands; but this is a subject which few of you understand, and many of you would affect to despise.

"What I myself rather incline to send you is an Essay on Hypochondriasis considered as a mental as well as bodily affection. I read it here to our Society, who did not, I believe, relish it much; however, if I may express my own opinion, it has some novelty and some merit, though it be rather metaphysical.

"I have many other medical papers, on the nature of cold, &c., to the amount of seven or eight; though if I sent any thing medical, I should rather, for so mixed a society as yours, send that on hypochondriasis. I have called these things essays, to save words; but you know that they do not deserve the title. Choose what I must send. You know me, and you know your Society: — I'll do whatever you please, because I look upon it to be more your affair than mine that I should make a tolerable figure."

In the following year, his aunt, Miss Duncan, died. At her earnest desire to see him once more before she closed her eyes, he had hastened down to Edinburgh a few weeks before her death; and on receiving, after his return, the account of that event having taken place, he wrote to Dr. Bell as follows: —

"Liverpool, September 25th, 1782.

"My dear Friend,

"I received on Saturday a few lines from B. Bell, informing me that my dear aunt paid the debt of nature on the 19th instant. I shall not trouble you with many reflections on a subject which to me is extremely distressing. On her account I have nothing but comfort to feel; but my poor sisters,—to them the loss can never be made up.

"I am at present very serious: disposed to pause and look round on the path through which I have directed my footsteps thus far on the journey of life. Dark and intricate lies the road behind me, but the forward prospect is tolerably bright. It is not to solace myself with these reflections that I employ my mind in this manner. I would willingly draw use from past error; and, from the review of what is gone,

establish some principles for my future conduct. I was early thrown upon the world, where no partial relation or friend could foster my vanity or palliate my faults. My experience may therefore be the more depended on. The following maxims appear to me to have more than common value in ensuring success in society, and an attention to them in some degree seems absolutely necessary to render genius or sagacity of any avail. But when I would communicate these to you, I turn from the task in despair. —— Write to me directly. —— Yours ever."

It is impossible to avoid regretting that he did not feel the courage to give the result of his experience.

A character like Dr. Currie's must rise in estimation the more it is known; and accordingly a few years' residence in Liverpool firmly established his reputation for talents, and for those qualities which merit general esteem, while an intimate acquaintance procured him the confidence and affection of his friends.

In January, 1783, his happiness was increased, and his prospects of independence and professional success were materially improved, by his marriage with the daughter of Mr. William

Wallace, an Irish gentleman established as a merchant in Liverpool, and lineally descended, (as well as his wife, who was his cousin-german and daughter of Mr. Hans Wallace of Waterford,) from the Scottish hero of that name. Satisfied, after an intimate knowledge of some years, that he might safely intrust his child's happiness to Dr. Currie's care, Mr. Wallace, with generous and open heart, bestowed her upon one, whose personal character and rising reputation constituted nearly all that he had to offer in return.

Dr. Currie was now happily settled with fair prospects in his profession, surrounded by friends who knew his value, and in the enjoyment of health apparently confirmed; and the period seemed to be at length arrived, when, after all his struggles and disappointments, his unshaken constancy and manly independence were to be rewarded.

The following extracts from his correspondence with Dr. Bell may be here introduced: —

"May 17th, 1783.

"My dear George,

"I received yours of the 13th this morning, with the various enclosures. The odes (especially that printed) are in a very high and bold style of poetry; and they breathe, as you justly

remark, the very spirit of ancient Greece. I have hardly seen any thing more animated and vigorous. The last stanza but one of the printed verses is peculiarly happy. In the written ode there is, upon a second reading, at least equal strength with that printed; but there is less eloquence, variety, and harmony. The personification of *Crown* is the only thing objectionable in the figures. Upon the whole, they are written in a spirit and manner fitted to kindle the most daring enthusiasm; and, were the occasion apter, I have seen nothing in poetry more likely to produce effect. Is Jones, who gave Specimens of Eastern Poetry, knighted? I understood he had entered at the Temple, and was studying law. So says Hayley. — You must know that I am particularly fond of the bold and daring tone of military poetry, and have twice attempted to strike it myself. In the year 1778, on the commencement of the French war, being full of ideas of going into the army, I began an imitation of the second ode in the third book of Horace; but my ardour was exhausted in three or four stanzas. After this, in my lonely walks about Arthur's Seat, I projected an original ode, to be entitled the Enthusiast, in which I introduced a Solitary in a romantic situation, agitated by the powers of

fancy in contemplating various pictures of future life; and at last, supposing himself a soldier and in the field of battle, attacking, charging, and overthrowing the enemy. I mingled the transition of feeling with the transition of attitude, and finished the whole by describing him as bounding over the heath in the supposed act of marching to battle. My Commentary on Horace was poor, but this was better. It was a subject on which I was at home; and had not the study of anatomy interfered, I might have made something of it. I mention it now, only to desire you will remind me of it when we next meet, because I wish to have your opinion on it."

"June 7th, 1783.

"My dear George,

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

"I like the scheme for you, because it will employ you. You are a very unhappy and very impotent being when idle: once out of the habit of exertion, you find yourself unable to originate any principle of activity, and your happiness becomes the prey of your sensibility; brooding over a hundred reflections, which now assume the most melancholy hue, and cursing in secret the impotence of a conduct which you cannot correct. In such an unhappy situation, what are

you to do? — To seek for amusement, while in society, in the play of words, in the trifling of wit, in any thing that can dissipate reflection; — to get rid of feelings most painful, by engaging your mind with the hazards of play; — or to lose all thought and sorrow at once, by drowning reflection in the arms of sleep? — On this subject I know I speak to your conviction, because I speak from my own. In the course of an experience sufficiently fraught with subjects for thought and painful anxiety, I have never found any relief from melancholy, but in some species of mental exertion: and I am not certain whether the torments of thought (on one occasion), produced by a long course of idleness, might not have terminated in consequences most fatal, had I not fortunately found relief in writing doggrel rhymes, — the only employment of which I was capable. Nay, I am convinced that it is not only necessary to my happiness to be busy, but that, in some respects, it is necessary to my virtue. The more idle I have been, the more deep have grown the shades of my thoughts, and the more fit my mind for desperate purposes, and all the black images that cross the bewildered and exasperated mind. In some such way, I have no doubt, many great villains have been formed — at least, where the mind had no original attachment

to virtue or to vice; and where the love of virtue has been naturally powerful, from such a train of circumstances have dreadful suicides, in many instances, been committed. But I wander from my subject."

Their pleasing intercourse was unhappily too soon to terminate: in January, 1784, Doctor Currie was called to Manchester to attend his friend, who, after a rapid illness, which baffled the skill of his physicians, sank under his disease, — taken away from a profession in which he would, probably, have attained a pre-eminent station, and leaving his family and friends stunned by the unexpected blow. Among the latter, there were none so warmly attached to him as Dr. Currie: brought up together from childhood in habits of closest intimacy, inherited from their parents, they preserved that intimacy through after-life. Differing widely in some respects, their attachment sustained no diminution, when the impetuous feelings of the first were checked by the temperate views and cooler judgment of the latter; and, in their course through life, no important step was taken by either, which was not communicated to the other, — no hopes or fears attendant on that course, were ever raised in the mind of one,

without awaking the correspondent sympathy of his friend.*

On this afflicting event, Dr. Currie wrote to Dr. Bell's sister in the following terms: —

"February 9th, 1784.

"My dear Miss Jean,

"The letter which I directed to Sir William Maxwell will, ere this, have reached you, and explained the melancholy event which at this moment fills my eyes with tears.

"On this most mournful occasion, I pray God to strengthen and support you. As the strongest

* The following epitaph, from the pen of Dr. Currie, is inscribed on the monument to Dr. Bell's memory, in St. John's Church, Manchester: —

Here rest the ashes
of Doctor George Bell,
late physician in Manchester,
who died the 3d day of February 1784.
He had high endowments from nature, —
a firm mind, a vigorous understanding,
a lively perception, and a heart
peculiarly generous, upright, and sincere.
By a well-regulated education
these gifts of Heaven were secured,
and united to pleasing manners, delicate taste,
and extensive knowledge.
His friends regarded him with strong affection,
his profession considered him as a rising ornament,
and length of days seemed only wanting
to establish his character and extend his fame,
when it pleased the Supreme Being
to put a period to his life
in the 29th year of his age. J. C.

ties which bind us to this earth dissolve, we must look to Heaven for assistance and consolation. Thither I hope we shall all learn to direct our eyes, and find peace and comfort restored in looking forward to that world, where we may hope to rejoin our dearest friends, and where the tear of sorrow shall forget to flow.

"Mr. Richardson will inform you of every particular you would wish to know; he will acquaint you that no care was omitted, nor any human aid wanting. To him I refer you. I wish only, on the present occasion, to express to you, Mrs. Bell and Miss Mary, my most affectionate sympathy on a loss which I feel as deeply as yourselves, and which no human being knows better how to estimate. I shall be most happy, if I can in any respect serve you, or in any way testify the affection I bear to yourselves, and fulfil the claims of gratitude and love which bind me to the memory of the dearest and earliest friend I had upon earth.

"I am, most truly,

"Your affectionate and faithful friend."

Sudden and rapid as Dr. Bell's illness had been, Dr. Currie had yet made several journeys to see him; travelling by night at a peculiarly severe season, and exposed to the combined in-

fluence of agitation, loss of rest, and intense anxiety. His unavailing exertions were followed by an alarming illness — cough and spitting of blood, — the attendants of pleurisy, and frequent precursors of consumption. By profuse bleedings, persevered in against the advice of his physicians, from a conviction, founded on the knowledge of his own constitution, that these alone could save his life, the violence of his complaint was arrested; but it left him in a state of debility that seemed, to his own mind, too clearly to forebode that he also should be a victim to consumption, in addition to those of his family who had died, and were dying, of this fatal disease. An effort, however, was to be made, for the sake of those recent ties that bound him to life. In compliance with the wishes of his friends, and more as a duty than from any sanguine expectation of benefit, he accordingly undertook a journey to Bristol, accompanied by his wife and their invaluable friend Miss Cropper, and leaving behind an infant son a few months old.

His recovery was for some time doubtful, and was retarded by many distressing causes operating on his spirits, at a time when his enfeebled frame could scarcely support existence. What contributed, at length, most essentially to the removal of his complaint was gentle exercise,

chiefly on horseback. A very full account of his case, with his own observations upon it, and of the state of his mind when the issue was uncertain, was published in the *Zoonomia* *, some years afterwards. This was written by himself, and is thought to require no apology for its insertion here. It is introduced by Dr. Darwin in the following terms: —

"The following case of hereditary consumption is related by a physician of great ability and very extensive practice; and, as it is his own case, abounds with much nice observation and useful knowledge; and, as it has been attended with a favourable event, may give consolation to many who are in a similar situation; and shows that Sydenham's recommendation of riding, as a cure for consumption, is not so totally ineffectual as is now commonly believed.

"J. C., aged 27, with black hair, and a ruddy complexion, was subject to cough from the age of puberty, and occasionally to spitting of blood. His maternal grandfather died of consumption, under thirty years of age; and his mother fell a victim to this disease, with which she had long been threatened, in her forty-third year, and immediately after she ceased to have children. In the severe winter of 1783–4, he

* Vol. ii. p. 293.

was much afflicted with cough; and, being exposed to intense cold, in the month of February he was seized with peripneumony. The disease was violent and dangerous; and after repeated bleedings, as well as blisterings, which he supported with difficulty, in about six weeks he was able to leave his bed. At this time the cough was severe, and the expectoration difficult. A fixed pain remained on the left side, where an issue was inserted; regular hectic came on every day about an hour after noon, and every night heat and restlessness took place, succeeded towards morning by general perspiration.

"The patient having formerly been subject to ague, was struck with the resemblance of the febrile paroxysm with what he had experienced under that disease, and was willing to flatter himself it might be of the same nature. He therefore took bark in the interval of fever, but with an increase of his cough; and this requiring venesection, the blood was found highly inflammatory. The vast quantity of blood which he had lost from time to time, produced a disposition to fainting when he resumed the upright posture, and he was therefore obliged to remain almost constantly in a recumbent position. Attempting to ride out in a carriage, he was surprised to find that he could sit upright for a

considerable time, while in motion, without inconvenience, though, on stopping the carriage, the disposition to fainting returned.

"At this time, having prolonged his ride beyond the usual length, he one day got into an uneven road at the usual period of the recurrence of the hectic paroxysm, and that day he missed it altogether. This circumstance led him to ride out daily in a carriage at the time the febrile accession might be expected; and sometimes by this means it was prevented, sometimes deferred, and almost always mitigated.

"This experience determined him to undertake a journey of some length, and Bristol being, as is usual in such cases, recommended, he set out on the 19th of April, and arrived there on the 2d of May. During the greater part of this journey (of 175 miles) his cough was severe, and, being obliged to be bled three different times on the road, he was no longer able to sit upright, but at very short intervals, and was obliged to lie at length in the diagonal of a coach. The hectic paroxysms were not interrupted during the journey, but they were irregular and indistinct; and the salutary effects of exercise, or rather of gestation, were impressed on the patient's mind.

"At Bristol he stayed a month, but reaped no

benefit. The weather was dry and the roads dusty, the water insipid and inert. He attempted to ride on horseback on the downs, but was not able to bear the fatigue for a distance of more than a hundred yards. The necessity of frequent bleedings kept down his strength, and his hectic paroxysms continued, though less severe. At this time, suspecting that his cough was irritated by the west winds bearing the vapour from the sea, he resolved to try the effects of an inland situation, and set off for Matlock in Derbyshire.

"During the journey he did not find the improvement he expected, but the nightly perspirations began to diminish; and the extraordinary fatigue he experienced, proceeded evidently from his travelling in a post-chaise, where he could not indulge in a recumbent position. The weather at Bristol had been hot, and the earth arid and dusty. At Matlock, during the month of June, 1784, there was almost a perpetual drizzle, the soil was wet, and the air moist and cold. Here, however, the patient's cough began to abate, and at intervals he found an opportunity of riding more or less on horseback. From two or three hundred yards at a time, he got to ride a mile without stopping; and at length he was able to sit on horseback during a

ride from Mason's Bath to the village of Matlock, along the Derwent, and round on the opposite banks, by the works of Mr. Arkwright, back to the house whence he started,—a distance of five miles. On dismounting, however, he was seized with deliquium; and soon after, the strength he had recovered was lost by an attack of the hæmorrhoids of the most painful kind, and requiring much loss of blood from the parts affected.

"On reflection, it appeared that the only benefit received by the patient was during motion; and continued motion could better be obtained in the course of a journey, than during his residence at any particular place. This, and other circumstances of a private but painful nature, determined him to set out from Matlock on a journey to Scotland. The weather was now much improved, and during the journey he recruited his strength. Though, as yet, he could not sit upright at rest for half an hour together, without a disposition to giddiness, dimness of sight, and deliquium, he was able to sit upright under the motion of a post-chaise during a journey of from forty to seventy miles daily, and his appetite began to improve. Still his cough continued, and his hectic flushings, though the chills were much abated and very irregular.

"The salutary effects of motion being now more striking than ever, he purchased a horse admirably adapted to a valetudinarian in Dumfries-shire, and being now able to sit on horseback for an hour together, he rode out several times a day. He fixed his residence for a few weeks at Moffat, a village at the foot of the mountains, whence the Tweed, the Clyde, and the Annan, descend in different directions; a situation inland, dry, and healthy, and elevated about three hundred feet above the surface of the sea. Here his strength recovered daily, and he began to eat animal food, which for several months before he had not tasted. Persevering in exercise on horseback, he gradually increased the length of his rides, according to his strength, from four to twenty miles a day; and, returning on horseback to Lancashire by the lakes of Cumberland, he arrived at Liverpool on the 1st of September, having rode the last day of his journey forty miles.

"The two inferences of most importance to be drawn from this narrative, are, first, the extraordinary benefit derived from gestation in a carriage, and still more the mixture of gestation and exercise on horseback, in arresting or mitigating the hectic paroxysm; and, secondly, that in the florid consumption, as Dr. Beddoes terms it, an elevated and inland air is, in certain cir-

cumstances, peculiarly salutary; while an atmosphere loaded with the spray of the sea is irritating and noxious. The benefit derived in this case from exercise on horseback, may lead us to doubt whether Sydenham's praise of this remedy be as much exaggerated as it has of late been supposed. Since the publication of Dr. C. Smyth on the Effects of Swinging in lowering the Pulse in the Hectic Paroxysm, the subject of this narrative has repeated his experiments in a great variety of cases, and has confirmed them. He has also repeatedly seen the hectic paroxysm prevented, or cut short, by external ablution of the naked body with tepid water.

"So much was his power of digestion impaired or vitiated by the immense evacuations, and the long-continued debility he underwent, that after the cough was removed, and, indeed, for several years after the period mentioned, he never could eat animal food without heat and flushing, with frequent pulse, and extreme drowsiness. If this drowsiness was encouraged, the fever ran high, and he awoke from disturbed sleep, wearied and depressed. If it was resolutely resisted by gentle exercise, it went off in about an hour, as well as the increased frequency of the pulse. This agitation was, however, such as to incapacitate him during the afternoon for study of any kind. The same effects did not follow a meal of

milk and vegetables; but under this diet his strength did not recruit; whereas, after the use of animal fool it recovered rapidly, notwithstanding the inconvenience already mentioned. For this inconvenience he at last found a remedy, in the use of coffee immediately after dinner, recommended to him by his friend Dr. Percival. At first this remedy operated like a charm; but, by frequent use, and indeed, by abuse, it no longer possesses its original efficacy.

"Dr. Falconer, in his Dissertation on the Influence of the Passions and Affections of the Mind on Health and Disease, supposes that the cheerfulness which attends hectic fever, the ever-springing hope which brightens the gloom of the consumptive patient, increases the diseased actions, and hastens his doom. And hence he is led to enquire, whether the influence of fear might not be substituted in such cases to that of hope, with advantage to the patient. This question I shall not presume to answer, but it leads me to say something of the state of the mind in the case just related.

"The patient, being a physician, was not ignorant of his danger, which some melancholy circumstances served to impress on his mind. It has already been mentioned that his mother and grandfather died of this disease. It may be added, that in the year preceding that on which

he was himself attacked, a sister of his was carried off by consumption in her seventeenth year; that in the same winter in which he fell ill, two other sisters were seized with the same fatal disorder, to which one of them fell a victim during his residence at Bristol; and that the hope of bidding a last adieu to the other was the immediate cause of his journey to Scotland, — a hope which, alas! was indulged in vain. The day on which he reached the end of his journey, her remains were committed to the dust! It may be conjectured, from these circumstances, that whatever benefit may be derived from the apprehension of death, must in this case have been obtained. The expectation of this issue was, indeed, for some time so fixed, that it ceased to produce much agitation; in conformity to that general law of our nature, by which almost all men submit with composure to a fate that is foreseen, and that appears inevitable. As, however, the progress of disease and debility seemed to be arrested, the hope and the love of life revived, and produced, from time to time, the observations and the exertions already mentioned.

"Wine and beer were rigorously abstained from during six months of the above history; and all the blood which was taken was even to the last buffy." — *February 3d*, 1795.

One of the first letters which Dr. Currie wrote, when able to sit up, was to the sister of Dr. Bell; it describes the composure with which he looked upon his own situation, and the strength of his feelings towards that friend, in affecting language.

"Bristol Hotwells, May 15th, 1784.

"My dear Miss Bell,

"I dare say you will frequently have accused me of unkindness in having so long deferred writing to you according to my promise, unless you should have heard from some other quarter how very weak and sickly I have been. You know that the subject nearest both to your heart and mine, is that which is of all others most affecting. Feeble and debilitated as I am, I am still unequal to the task of entering upon it; and, though I have much to say, I must defer engaging with the subject, in hopes that Heaven may yet afford me a degree of strength more equal to the task. But I could no longer defer sending you a few lines to explain my conduct, and likewise to give you some account of my own health, in which I know you are most kindly interested. I made no progress in the recovery of my health after my last letter to Mr. ——, notwithstanding I had for some time the benefit

of country air: I grew for several days weaker and weaker, and at the end of a fortnight had lost ground considerably. A constant hectic fever consumed my strength; and this, with other symptoms of consumption, put me again in mind of preparing to follow my dear friend. It was, however, judged proper that I should make a trial of the Bristol waters; and accordingly I set off for this place on the 20th of last month, accompanied by my wife and a lady who is our particular friend. Being extremely weak, I lay at length in a large coach, and after eight days' travelling arrived here considerably improved in every respect. My cough is almost gone, and my hectic much abated, but I am still very feeble. Though my appetite is pretty good, my strength does not return in the same proportion as it did during my journey. I cannot yet ride on horseback: I lie on a couch most part of the day, for an erect posture always fatigues me; and I am now obliged, at the end of every other sentence of this letter, to lean down to recruit my strength. The physicians here are, however, of opinion that I have a good chance for recovery; and though I am careful not to flatter myself, (a common error, you know, in my case,) I find my hopes of life greatly increased.

"But whatever be my fate, I hope I shall meet it with composure and fortitude. The hand of death may cut me off from the tenderest connections, yet, by the mercy of Heaven, I hope it will re-unite me to those friends who were the earliest objects of my affection, and whose memory must be ever dear to my heart.

"I will not ask you to write to me at this place, for we shall leave it in a few days. The waters are of no consequence to me; if any thing can serve me, it must be pure air and gentle exercise. I mean to try the effect of another journey. In a few days we turn our faces north. We shall stop at Matlock, in Derbyshire, for eight or ten days, and shall then return to Liverpool. As soon as I arrive there, you shall hear from me on other subjects, if my strength will permit.

"In the mean time I desire to be remembered in the kindest manner to Mrs. Bell, and Miss Mary. I am always,

"My dear Miss Bell,

"Your faithful and affectionate friend."

By the foregoing extract from the *Zoonomia*, it will be seen that Dr. Currie visited Scotland at this time under circumstances of the most distressing nature; and he was naturally anxious to rejoin, with as little delay as possible, those

connections whom death still spared at Liverpool. He left Dumfries abruptly; but from Carlisle addressed this letter of apology to his relatives, whom he had quitted: —

"*To Mrs. Duncan, of Lochrutton.*

"My dear Madam,

"I hope you will not misunderstand my precipitate retreat from Dumfries, on the day on which you were expected. My regard and affection for you are such, that I should be ashamed to think it necessary to defend them; they form a large portion of my happiness on earth; and I could now less than ever afford to have the ties that connect me to you and yours loosened, though but for a moment. Were I to attempt to unfold to you the motives that induced me to leave Dumfries on Friday morning, rather than twenty-four hours after, I should fatigue myself, and probably afford you little satisfaction.

"I had formed a scheme for my return home, which my stay would have disconcerted; that was, indeed, of little consequence. But I had mentioned a day for my return to Liverpool, on the supposition of my leaving Dumfries on Thursday; and I could not well bear the thoughts of my dear wife's suffering a disappointment on this subject, after the many disappointments and

anxieties she has already undergone. I cannot, indeed, deny that my impatience to return home has increased, as the prospect of gratifying it has approached. My wife and her little child have been continually presenting themselves to my thoughts, and have awakened sensations of tenderness and anxiety which it is needless to explain. My dear boy's illness, though nowise serious, and my wife's uneasiness on his account, had produced such an effect on my spirits, already weakened by sickness and sorrow, as almost to overpower my present enjoyments. The attachment of a parent to his child has been increased in me towards my little William, by circumstances which your affectionate heart will easily suggest.

"Scarcely was he born, when I had the near prospect of leaving him for ever. I saw him in idea cast on the wide world without a father's counsel or protection; when I pressed the bed of sickness, the cries and smiles of the little innocent equally pierced my heart, and his image presented itself to my thoughts with such mingled sensations of tenderness and sadness, as have bound him to me by ties too strong for language to express. I could say much on this subject, but there is something that tells me I have said enough. You already understand, and probably excuse my conduct: I yielded to the feel-

ings to which I have alluded, because I foresaw that I could only be with you for a few hours, and that there were circumstances which would attend our meeting, that would damp all enjoyment. I arrived at Mossknow on Friday evening; and yesterday afternoon, after the rain, proceeded to Woodhouselees. I arrived here a few hours ago, and had the happiness to find two letters from home. To-morrow morning I proceed before breakfast to make the tour of the lakes, and you shall hear from me at Lancaster on Friday next. I am in good health and tolerable spirits. I shall be very impatient to hear from you, and shall hope to find a letter for me in Liverpool when I get to the end of my journey. My best love to you all.

"I am ever most truly and affectionately yours,

"JAMES CURRIE."

"Carlisle, Sunday Evening,
July, 1784."

Soon after his arrival at home, he was requested by the members of the Manchester Philosophical Society to write a Memoir of Dr. Bell, who had been one of their body, accompanied by a translation of a thesis by the latter, on the Physiology of Plants, by which he had acquired great credit in the University of

Edinburgh. This painful task he promised to undertake; but such was the state of his spirits, and so greatly enfeebled was his bodily strength, that for many months he was utterly unequal to the attempt; and it was not till the following year (1785) that, after various efforts, which his health compelled him to suspend, he was enabled to complete his task. This Memoir, which was Dr. Currie's first appearance publicly as an author, placed him at once in a high rank in point of literary composition. It was published in the second volume of the Transactions of the Manchester Philosophical Society, and is now given in the Appendix.*

The state of Dr. Currie's health continued extremely uncertain, and his progress towards recovery was slow and feeble, as will be seen by the following extract from one of his letters to his kinsman in America, dated May 6th, 1785:—

"Since my last, which informed you of my return to Liverpool, nothing very material has happened to me. I have got through the winter tolerably well, though I have not at any time been long free of pulmonary complaints. These produced the necessity of frequent bleedings,

* No. 3.

which enfeebled my spirits, and reduced my strength. I have, however, continued to attend to the duties of my profession unremittingly, though for two months of the winter I was obliged to make my visits in a carriage. With the return of the summer I have felt a return of health and strength; and I am at this moment as free of complaint as a man can expect to be, in whose temperament melancholy and depression are naturally predominant, and whose profession is of a nature that keeps his anxiety constantly awake, and sometimes wounds his sensibility most deeply.

"I have not yet any addition to my family, nor am I at all desirous of increasing it. The chance that I should live to educate my children is not very flattering; for though the disease which threatened me last year, is, for the present, removed, I have no great reason to presume, considering the havoc it has made in my family, that I am safe from its future attacks. Nevertheless, reflections of this kind nowise disturb my peace of mind. Death has been so long familiar to my imagination, that it is not a subject of terror; nay, if I were to confess the truth,—and why should I not confess it?—there is something in my spirit (neither uncheerful nor discontented) that could at times incline me to

wish, rather than to dread, a removal from this earth and its paltry cares. * * * * But in the midst of these sensations my wife and child present themselves to my mind, and by warming my heart, chain me down to this world, its business, and its enjoyments. With this disposition, you will not be surprised that I make many serious reflections on your situation. After sixteen years of the flower of your life spent in toil of body and mind, you seem in your own ideas as little independent as ever. You appear to be no nearer the limits of your exertions, nor to have formed any fixed idea of the object for which your days and nights are consumed. If you can form no conception of any plan of life happier than that which you at present pursue, be easy and contented, and fix yourself to continue it as long as your strength will permit. But if, on the other hand, you know of any change that would contribute to your happiness, for God's sake no longer delay it, lest your irresolution should outlast the capacity of enjoyment, and it should be said of you, that you knew how to gain a fortune, but not how to use it. You seem now to have given up all thoughts of leaving America; at least, I have given up all hopes of it. What I have to say, therefore, on your future plans, will be founded on the supposition

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that you are to live and die in Virginia. The first thing then is, whether you ought to marry * * * to this question I cannot answer. It must depend on your health, your temper, your habits of life, and the power you may have of changing these, according as it may be necessary for the peace and happiness of another. I speak as a married man, and therefore from experience, when I tell you, that he who wishes that his wife should make him happy, must be much more of a domestic man than you are at present, or than you ever were in Virginia. A scattered way of life would be intolerable to a woman of any sensibility or affection. She would not find in you the protector or the comfort she had a right to expect. * * * * * * A man who has neither wife nor children, finds, when he grows old, a want of those cordial and affectionate attentions, which in every part of life form the best part of our enjoyments, and which are indispensable to happiness in the winter of our days. * * Think of all this, and form a decision for yourself. If you are to marry at all, let it be soon. * * * * * * Before I conclude my letter, which I find I must do very soon, I wish to apologize to you for the freedom which runs through it. I know you so well, and have known you so long; I am so nearly related

to you by the ties of blood, and so much nearer still by those of affection and friendship; that I cannot help indulging an opinion, (whether fanciful, or not, you best can tell,) that you wish me to speak to you plainly and sincerely, and with all the truth and confidence of one who is, at least, as much attached to you as any man upon earth. What renders me uneasy about you, is plainly this, — the variableness of your temper and opinions. With great quickness of perception, rapidity of thought, and vigour of understanding, the complexion of your ideas, in the course of a few days, runs through as great a variety as the tints of the rainbow; and amidst the various objects which excite your fancy by turns, your resolutions are distracted, and your conduct is rendered indecisive. This *was* the character of your youth; whether it continues with you, I presume not to say. To some objects you were indeed steady; — you had a princely ambition, for which I always admired you, and from which I caught myself some portion of the Promethean fire. You likewise had no *dislike* to money, which I always considered not as a sordid, unmeaning appetite for yellow dust, but as ambition in disguise — the love of money, as the means of consequence, independence, and influence. So I would wish, and so I do consider

it still; and I must confess to you I begin to resemble you rather more in this particular. * * * * I have no time to say more than that I am now in perfect health and spirits, and growing fat. My letter was chiefly written two months ago.

"I am ever yours most affectionately,

"JAMES CURRIE."

In the succeeding year he wrote the following letter to the same correspondent, remarkable for the valuable advice given in the former part of it, and for the connection which it bears in the latter, to the political letter which he afterwards published under the signature of Jasper Wilson, addressed to Mr. Pitt.*

"Liverpool, 12th September, 1786.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

* * * * * "Immediately on receiving your pacquet, I sat down to answer it, and in a few days I filled several sheets of paper; but no opportunity offering of transmitting them, they have lain by nearly three months; and now, when I look over them, I am so little satisfied, that I shall certainly commit them to the flames.

* "The writer of this was one of the warmest of your admirers." — *Letter of Jasper Wilson*, p. 1.

* * * The truth is, I do not consider that any remarks of mine can be of use to you. Every thing I can say, your own reflection must have a thousand times suggested. The thing required is not to *present the truth, but to fix it on your mind;* to arrest, if possible, that rapid succession of ideas, over which you seem to have no command, and which, by exhibiting almost in the same instant a variety of pictures, perplexes and confounds your judgment. With a quickness of apprehension that is very uncommon, and an insight into the character of others which is generally clear and correct, you have not the faculty of forming steady decisions concerning yourself; because your imagination and feelings are not under discipline, and, in the act of self-examination, your ideas are disturbed. Fatigued by reflection, you turn your attention to external things; and under the influence of that ambition which habit has reduced almost into an instinct, you rush into action in pursuit of wealth, which cannot add to your enjoyment if obtained, and in pursuit of which your *capacity of happiness* is daily diminishing.

"My dear friend! is not this a true account of your situation? If it be, what can my advice avail? Partial as I know you are to my judgment — certain as I hope you are of my affec-

tion — can it be expected that a letter wafted across the Atlantic should have the force of a talisman, and stop you in the midst of your career?

"My much esteemed kinsman! you will never return to Europe, and it is not likely that we shall meet again. Painful as the reflection is, you cannot be blamed if you have determined to continue in America. It is your country. * * * * Your manners, your habits, your intimacies, are contracted in it; and perhaps you might not find it agreeable to form them anew in your native country, where most of your early connections are swept away. But is your manner of life to continue unchanged? Have you no object in view beyond the present hour? For what have you been toiling through the best part of your days? Now that you have acquired a fortune and a reputation that raise you above the necessity of severe exertions, and enable you to follow that plan of life which may most conduce to your happiness, can you introduce no change that may bless your manhood, and cheer and comfort you in the vale of years? * * * * * If you cannot, there is no more to be said; if you can, why, in God's name, delay it?

"Were I in your situation, I should certainly endeavour to unite myself to some woman of sense and virtue, in whose counsel I might find

assistance and support—in whose tenderness and affection I might taste the purest and best of blessings which Heaven, in its bounty, has imparted to man. * * * Believe me, who have some experience, the endearments of domestic life far exceed the gratifications of ambition, and are the surest foundation of human happiness. * * * * If you feel this, as I do, you will moderate your desire of increasing your property. You have already all that is necessary to independence; the rest depends on your own mind. You may accumulate wealth without ceasing; you may heap Pelion upon Ossa; but, unless you obtain the command of your passions, you are still a slave. I conclude the subject in the words of your old friend Horace —

Latius regnes avidum domando
Spiritum, quam si Lybiam remotis
Gadibus jungas, et uterque Pœnus
Serviat uni.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

"I know not whether you are so far interested in the fate of Britain as to hear with any pleasure of her prosperity. * * * * * A wonderful change has taken place in our public affairs since the accession of the present minister to power * * * He has, by most vigorous exertions, re-established our national

credit — the funds having risen in value nearly 40 per cent., and now being as high as previous to the American war. * * * He has established our character with foreign nations, and made the voice of England of decisive authority on the European Continent. He has saved the British Empire in India from destruction, and restored our power and authority throughout all Hindoostan. Lastly, under his auspices, new channels of trade and new branches of industry have been established, and the manufactures and commerce of Britain have arisen to a pitch unknown to any former period of our history. This wonderful man is now in his twenty-eighth year, an honour and a blessing to his country, and the first orator and statesman of this age." * * * *

In the early part of the year 1787, the national feeling became strongly excited upon the subject of the African slave trade; and those combined exertions for its extinction had their origin, which, after twenty years' ineffectual struggle, were at length, in 1806, productive of its abolition. Writing on this occasion to his friend Miss Cropper, Dr. Currie expressed himself as follows: — "The universal interest that is excited on this subject is by far the finest feature of the present age. I am very glad that Dr.

Percival's exertions in favour of the poor Africans are extending themselves so widely and successfully."

The town of Liverpool, it is well known, was at that time chiefly remarkable for the extent to which it was concerned in this traffic. So closely, indeed, was the African trade interwoven with its commerce, that it was not easy to find individuals in Liverpool who were not connected with it, either directly or otherwise. It had likewise been so long the staple trade of the town, that the African merchants did not appear to entertain a doubt as to its nature, or the propriety of its continuance. While the rest of the kingdom (the few other places excepted, which were engaged in the same trade,) was calling aloud, in the name of outraged humanity and national honour, for the interference of the legislature to put a stop to it, the inhabitants of Liverpool, apparently enveloped in an atmosphere of their own, at first heard the outcry with astonishment. But this feeling was quickly converted into contempt for what they termed the affectation of humanity, and succeeded by indignation at such an attack on their commercial existence.

In these views Dr. Currie did not participate; his opinions and feelings were in unison with those of the nation. His position, therefore, in

Liverpool, was one of extreme difficulty and delicacy. He was in the midst of many friends, who were embarked in the slave-trade, with whom he was in habits of daily intercourse and intimacy, and from whom he experienced much kindness. His professional success, too, depended on the good opinion of the community in which he was placed, — to what extent may be conceived, when it is stated, that those suspected or known to entertain sentiments hostile to the traffic, were generally either received with coolness, or avoided with dislike, by the persons concerned in it. At a subsequent period he experienced individually, to a certain degree, the effect of these feelings, as it became the fashion in Liverpool to designate the opposers of the slave trade as the friends and admirers of the French Revolution, and the enemies of the ministers. "The merchants engaged in that trade (as he himself observes*) uniformly combined their own cause with that of established government, and represented the Abolitionists as the same class of men with the Jacobins of France." One advantage, indeed, he possessed, — that, being in habitual communication with many individuals who carried on this branch of

* Letter to Dr. W. C. Wells.

commerce, he had an opportunity of knowing that to be in the African trade did not necessarily render a man either unfeeling or dishonest. He knew that many of them (his own friends) were generous, affectionate, and humane, in private life; liberal, enterprising, and intelligent, in public: and it did not escape his observation, that the general indignation against the *trade itself* was equally directed against *the individuals* concerned in it, without allowance for the circumstances in which they might be placed. He abhorred the slave trade; but he was anxious that excess of enthusiasm and ardent feeling (where, indeed, it was scarcely possible to be calm,) should not injure the cause, which they were striving to promote.

It was under such impressions, but without communicating his intentions to any of his mercantile friends, that he wrote the following letter to Mr. Wilberforce, — that eloquent and venerable philanthropist, who, if he has lived to rejoice at the abolition of the slave-trade, so far as Great Britain is concerned, has still to lament that all the good effects that were practicable, and which were fondly anticipated from it, have not yet been obtained.

"*To William Wilberforce Esq., M.P., London.*

"Liverpool, December 31. 1787.

"SIR,

"A man of your character and situation cannot have much leisure, and I will not detain you over a long preface. The object I have in view will necessarily lead to a discussion of some length; but will, I hope, in itself, carry an apology for the trouble I give and the freedom I use.

"You have pledged yourself to call the attention of Parliament to the subject of the slave-trade, — I rejoice that you have; the interests of truth and humanity cannot be in better hands. That you have obtained information from the best sources there is little reason to doubt, since your reputation is no less clear for judgment than for zeal. An inhabitant of Liverpool may, however, express some surprise, that the merchants of this place, many of them concerned in the trade, and some of them for several years resident on the coast of Africa, should not have been consulted. Perhaps their evidence may more properly be required in some future stage of the business; but, as the public impression, not only of the nature of this traffic, but of the characters of those who carry it on,

will be much influenced by the manner in which you introduce the subject in parliament, pardon my presumption, I beseech you, if I offer some remarks with a view to this point, for your candid consideration. To persons not in the habit of reflecting upon it, the traffic in slaves cannot be mentioned without kindling a degree of warmth that tends to repel all argument concerning it. Their reprobation of the trade itself, leads to reprobation of those engaged in it; and *their* criminality is supposed to be proportionate to the evil produced. Such, seemingly, has been the assumption of many of those, who have written against the slave trade; and such, certainly, has been the principle on which some of them have acted. Believing the African merchants and traders not only accountable for the consequences of this trade, but conscious of their guilt in conducting it, men, purposely employed in acquiring information concerning it, have shunned all intercourse with them, and drawn a great part of their intelligence from the lowest class of seamen. Nor is this all: conceiving that every enormity might be expected from the masters of vessels, who could conduct such a trade, they have listened eagerly to the accounts of their cruel usage of the seamen, and to the rumours of their dreadful barbarities of various kinds, with which

the ears of the credulous have been abused. That there is no foundation for any of these reports I am, however, far from asserting. One act of this kind, of a deeper dye than usual, and supported by general belief, has been imputed to Capt. H., of the King Joe, Guinea-man, a ship belonging to Mr. ——. I myself repeated this report; and, by some means or other, it reached the committee in London, of which Mr. G. Sharpe is president, with my authority for its truth. Application was made to me to authenticate it; but, after diligent enquiry, I could not find such evidence of the fact as was by any means equal to supporting it in a court of justice. On two similar reports I hear that processes at law have been instituted in London, in one of which a nonsuit has been obtained by the party accused, and the other is about to be abandoned for want of evidence. Such conduct is imprudent in the very last degree, and it grieves me extremely to see zeal and humanity so very ill directed. There is a strange disposition in human beings, when under the influence of passion, to impute bad motives to their fellow creatures; and hence it is that humanity itself, when it spurns the bounds of reason, may be the source of hatred and uncharitableness. Even in the best minds, excess

of feeling in one instance is generally accompanied by a defect of it in some other. The amiable — the admirable Las Casas, in pity to the natives of Hispaniola, first carried the Africans three thousand miles across the ocean, to suffer in the Spanish mines the worst of slavery, and to perish at length under insupportable toil. When the advocates for the abolition of negro slavery attack the general character of the merchants and planters concerned in it, they discover an ignorance of human life; and they advance out of their stronghold to take a ground, on which, I am persuaded, they will often be repulsed by their adversaries. When they assert that the slave-trade is the destruction of two thousand seamen annually, and that the masters of the ships employed are, in general, men of such barbarous dispositions as to inflict unprovoked cruelties on their crews, they bring forward positions, which, in my opinion, cannot be proved, and which, I doubt not, may be opposed by a reference to facts. It is a truth, that, in those of my acquaintance, who *are* and *have been* masters of Guinea-men, a great majority are men of general fair character, — that some of them are men of considerable improvement of mind, — and that I could point out amongst them more than one instance of

uncommon integrity and kindness of heart. The same may be said of the body of the merchants concerned in the slave trade; who are, some of them, men of liberal education and enlightened understandings; and, for spirit and enterprise in commerce, very much distinguished. Men of candour, whatever their opinions of this traffic may be, will see that this fact is supported by reason and probability, when the combined influence of custom, education, and interest, is fully considered. A sailor is seldom a nice casuist. He takes a trip to Guinea because the wages are good; and, if he lives, rises, perhaps, first to be a mate, and afterwards a master: in this station, a few voyages more enable him to live at home, and to take shares in vessels commanded by younger adventurers. His children inherit his fortune, his commerce, and his opinions of the slave-trade; in which, perhaps, they are deeply engaged before they have ever heard that a doubt is entertained of its lawfulness. The force of example operates powerfully on young minds; and the connections diffuse this traffic very widely throughout the mercantile body. Many there are who, when they reflect, admit the slave trade to be an evil; but they contend that it is an evil unavoidable, and, therefore, to be defended on the plea of ne-

cessity. The prejudices of education, and the influence of example, are strengthened by the sense of interest. Men are not disposed to look for arguments to overturn a traffic, sanctioned by long-established custom, which they feel to be lucrative, and know to be legal. Besides this, persons immediately engaged in it, consider it rather as a national than a private concern; and, in truth, it is but lately that individuals in private life have begun to reason on the justice or injustice of national transactions.

"The American war, which excited the spirit of party so keenly, and which involved the consideration of all those great points, on which the principles of liberty and legislation are founded, has produced a great improvement in the sentiments of mankind. The number of those who reason on political measures is astonishingly increased, as well as the ease with which their sentiments are communicated to each other; and hence public opinion has risen to the rank of a fourth estate in our constitution; in times of tranquillity, possessing powerful influence, and in the collisions of different branches of our government, deciding as an umpire with irresistible force. That the spirit of discussion, excited by the Revolution of America, should take a direction to our commerce with Africa,

is what might be expected in the natural course of things. As domestic tranquillity and prosperity have increased, the public attention to this subject has been more and more excited; and the parliamentary enquiry which you have (so much to your honour) voluntarily engaged to bring forward, the nation would, perhaps, soon have demanded of her representatives. But while I rejoice, in common with every friend to truth and liberty, that the business is come to this public issue, I wish to use my humble endeavours in checking the influence of that intemperate zeal which may defeat its own purpose, by complicating a question of the clearest nature, and of the greatest magnitude, with other points, by no means clear points, which, in their nature, may excite the bitterness of party; in their discussion, expose the friends of freedom to a defeat; and which, established, will not add a feather to the mighty weight by which the scales of truth preponderate. Facts, such as I have stated, as well as the reasoning I have deduced from them, must owe what influence they have, in a great measure, to the opinion entertained of the person who offers them. My name, I fear, will be of little service to you in this respect, for I am a stranger to you, and have not obtained a character with the world at large.

Some of your friends, however, know me; and, I believe I may mention Mr. Milnes, member for York, as one who will be ready to testify that I am an honest man, and likely to be actuated by pure motives. I have resided in Liverpool upwards of seven years, and am totally unconnected with any species of trade. My profession (that of a physician) has led me into general intercourse with my townsmen, of whom I have spoken with an impartiality, that has not been disturbed by the recollections of much friendship and kindness, which I have received at their hands.

"I seldom hear the justice or morality of the trade seriously defended. Very frequently, indeed, it is asserted, that the condition of the Negroes in the West Indies is happier and better than in their own country; and, therefore, that those transported to our sugar colonies can really sustain no injury. Whence, then, I have asked, arises the waste of life in the West Indies, which occasions the necessity of so large a supply to keep up the number there; and whence the increase of life in Africa, which affords this supply, without the numbers there being diminished? This I have ever found an *argumentum crucis*, and I verily believe it unanswerable. Ten millions of negroes have been

carried across the ocean to support a population which, it is said, does not at present amount to more than 800,000 souls. Ten families, planted in those islands 300 years ago, when the slave-trade commenced under the auspices of freedom and of nature, with the advantages of a fertile soil and a climate congenial to their constitutions, might, by this time, have produced a greater number. Who can doubt it? Within half this time, a handful of Englishmen have spread themselves over an immense continent, — have converted a wilderness into a fertile country, — have given battle to the most powerful people of Europe, — and, through a sea of toils and troubles, have risen to the rank of thirteen independent states. The English were free men; the unhappy Africans, alas! were slaves. The argument of the superior happiness of the West India negroes being abandoned, another mode of reasoning is resorted to. The slave-trade, it is said, forms so large a part of our commerce, and gives vent to such a quantity of our manufactures, that the prosperity of the nation would be fatally affected, if it were abandoned. How far this is true, will be best determined by those who have access to the general details of our manufactures and commerce. It ought not, however, to be forgot that the experiment of abandoning this trade has

been already made, without fatal consequences, at a time when the kingdom laboured under all the calamities of a complicated war. At present, then, when the nation is blessed with peace and unlooked-for prosperity, and when the helm of government is directed by a genius of the very first order, means may probably be found, not only to ward off any evil to the nation at large, from the desertion of the slave-trade, but even to satisfy the individuals more immediately concerned. But I forget myself in entering into reasonings with you on the subject, who have studied it so fully, and whose sources of information must be so extensive and complete. My principal object has been to give some general account of the characters and situation of the people here, concerned in the slave trade; and such an one as may tend to counteract the representations, which you may find in various late publications — representations, in my judgment, inconsistent with truth; and in which, those who plead the cause of humanity in one instance, are wounding her in another. It has been lately mentioned to me, by a person deeply engaged in the slave trade, that when Mr. —— came to Liverpool to obtain information concerning it, some of the merchants, himself among others, consulted together on the subject of

meeting him, and giving him, openly and fairly, every assistance in their power: but, finding that he made no application to them, and that he went about in disguise, to collect intelligence among the lower class of seamen, they took the alarm, and began to discover that hostile notions were entertained of their conduct and sentiments, which they were not conscious that they deserved. Far be it from me to impute any blame to Mr. ——; no person thinks more highly of the purity of his intentions; but facts, such as these, you ought to know, as they illustrate the temper and feelings of both of the parties concerned. In truth, many of the African merchants express themselves very willing that the slave trade should be investigated in parliament. They cannot believe that it will be annihilated then; and if it is permitted to go on unrestricted, they see very clearly that the odium of conducting it will no longer rest upon them. From what I have heard, I think they would readily agree to any regulation for restricting the number of slaves, taken on board, to a certain proportion with the tonnage of the ship: something of this kind is agreed to be necessary. At present, it is thought fair to ship two negroes for every ton: in the transport service, there are two tons allowed to every man. Some of the

merchants seem to approve of measures for the gradual abolition of the trade: these, indeed, they commonly say, ought to consist in means for meliorating the condition of the slaves in the West Indies; which, by augmenting the numbers born there, would diminish the demand for those imported, and, at last, destroy it altogether. Others think the most certain method of securing better treatment to the West India negroes, is to obstruct the supplies from Africa. This would operate more powerfully on the planters than a thousand direct statutes. While supplied with provisions from America, the West Indies neglected raising them at home; but, when the war cut off this supply, they then raised them in great quantities. The application is obvious. Without presuming to give an opinion on the manner in which you ought to proceed, I will suppose that your proposal in parliament may rather be for a gradual abolition of the trade in slaves (accompanied with some measure for their gradual emancipation in the islands), than for its entire stoppage at once. This, I think, will appear to you, not only the more practicable, but the better scheme. Should this be your plan, I would just hint that, for the remaining period during which the trade is to be carried

on, it might be advisable to have an exclusive company of those now engaged in the trade; and the size of their vessels, and the proportion of slaves to each, may be regulated by law. At the same time, a diminution of the whole number of slaves transported from year to year, may be secured either by a positive restriction, or a gradually increasing duty. Such a scheme might, perhaps, be attended with some direct encouragement of the trade for the other articles of export which Africa affords, and which, by this means, might be gradually increased to a degree, that would more than compensate our merchants and manufacturers for the loss of the traffic in slaves. But I am sensible that I trespass on your patience, and will hasten to a conclusion. Whatever means parliament may take, I am confident that good must result from the discussion you are about to bring on. It will be the means of enlightening the nation more and more on the subject, and the public will discover the basis on which negro slavery is supported. Hitherto, statesmen have cautiously avoided all discussion concerning it, knowing how abhorrent it must appear to humanity and freedom; and yet believing its existence to rest on some invulnerable necessity. But it is blas-

phemy against Almighty power to suppose, without examination, a necessity for the establishment of a system of slavery: and surely the friends of truth have a right to call for a clear demonstration of a fact, so contrary to the usual course of Providence, and so repugnant to the wisdom and benevolence that pervade the universe of God.

"Go on then, Sir, to this examination, with that magnanimity of mind and fearlessness of spirit, so consonant to your character and to the cause you have undertaken. The blessings and prayers of wise and good men attend your progress. The subject you are to propose is, surely, as great as ever agitated the hearts of freemen. The principles on which you stand are not of partial application, nor will they fade away like the *fashion of a day:* they apply, immediately, to a hundred millions of souls: in their consequences, to the whole of the human race; and, in duration, they extend from eternity to eternity, like the Almighty Being from whom they spring.

"It will give me pleasure to have a few lines from you, to say that this is received. I write totally without concert with any of the mercantile body; and, as my name cannot give

any authority to my opinions, I do not wish it mentioned.

"With the highest respect,
"I have the honour to be, &c. &c.
"JAMES CURRIE."

The above letter produced a friendly reply from Mr. Wilberforce, and was the occasion of a correspondence at different intervals respecting the slave-trade; which was, some years later, revived upon a subject of interest so powerful, as to throw even that great question into the shade.

By temperance in conduct and in language, Dr. Currie contributed to advance the cause of abolition in Liverpool, and to aid the unwearied efforts of his friends, Mr. Roscoe, Mr. Rathbone, the Rev. John Yates, and many others of its distinguished advocates. Peculiarly vulnerable as a professional man, he was not deterred by this consideration, — nor ever allowed feelings connected with his individual interest to check his steady but regulated zeal in favour of humanity and justice. In the letter to Dr. Wells, already quoted, he remarks that his judgment was not founded on, though it might be strengthened by, feeling; that he was in favour of a gradual abolition, with a national compensation to indi-

viduals; but for any abolition rather than none; and that these sentiments were well known, for that he never concealed, although he did not unnecessarily express them. Unhappily he did not survive to witness the abolition of the trade, which took place the year after his decease; nor to rejoice that Mr. Roscoe had an opportunity of supporting, in his place in the House of Commons, a measure of which he had so long been the ardent and enlightened advocate in private.

In March, 1788, the following poem appeared anonymously in the London papers. It is the joint production of Mr. Roscoe and Dr. Currie, although it is not easy to assign to each his respective share of the composition: —

THE AFRICAN.

Wide over the tremulous sea
  The moon spread her mantle of light;
And the gale, gently dying away,
  Breath'd soft on the bosom of night.

On the forecastle Maraton stood,
  And poured forth his sorrowful tale;
His tears fell unseen in the flood,
  His sighs passed unheard on the gale.

Ah, wretch! in wild anguish he cried,
  From country and liberty torn, —
Ah, Maraton! would thou hadst died
  Ere o'er the salt waves thou wert borne!

Thro' the groves of Angola I strayed,
  Love and hope made my bosom their home;
There I talk'd with my favourite maid,
  Nor dreamt of the sorrow to come.

From the thicket the man-hunter sprung,
  My cries echoed loud through the air;
There was fury and wrath on his tongue,
  He was deaf to the shrieks of despair!

Accursed be the merciless band,
  That his love could from Maraton tear;
And blasted this impotent hand,
  That was severed from all I held dear.

Flow ye tears — down my cheeks ever flow —
  Still let sleep from my eye-lids depart;
And still may the arrow of woe
  Drink deep of the stream of my heart.

But, hark! on the silence of night
  My Adila's accents I hear;
And, mournful beneath the wan light,
  I see her loved image appear.

Slow o'er the smooth ocean she glides,
  As the mist that hangs light on the wave;
And fondly her lover she chides,
  That lingers so long from his grave!

"O! Maraton, haste thee," she cries;
  "Here, the reign of oppression is o'er;
"The tyrant is robb'd of his prize,
  "And Adila sorrows no more."

Now, sinking amidst the dim ray,
  Her form seems to fade on my view;
O stay thee, my Adila, stay! —
  She beckons, and I must pursue.

To-morrow, the white man in vain
  Shall proudly account me his slave;
My shackles I plunge in the main,
  And rush to the realms of the brave.

It may perhaps not be displeasing to the reader to know the history of this composition, which will give him some idea of the character of Dr. Currie as a man of taste and letters. It is as follows: —

"Liverpool, March 16. 1788.

"My dear ——,

"I am hurried in point of time, and must hasten to the immediate purpose of my writing. Know, then, that I am about to request you to usher into the world the following poem. Put it into the *Morning Herald*, the *Post*, or the *World*, as you judge best. I forbid you to guess, at least to guess aloud, who wrote it, and I request you not even to mention whence you had it. Send it in your own hand.

"There are two or three stanzas more that might be introduced in the course of the poem, but what you have is enough for a song. Possibly it may attract the notice of some musician,

be set, and brought into notice either at Vauxhall or one of the theatres. Indeed, to speak truth, it has been already set to music, and if you choose it, I will send you the copy.

"The subject is at present popular, and a simple ditty like this may, perhaps, do good; at any rate it will do no harm; and if it should sink at once, it signifies nothing. It has already been of service in diverting a stream of indignation, that a certain heart could hardly contain.

"Let me know what you think of it. You that are a *natural man* must be the best judge. There is a reason why it should be printed with as little delay as possible. So write to me how you have disposed of it. I rather incline to the *World*, but do as you please.

"To say that I write in haste, in great haste, is hardly necessary.

"Yours ever,

"JAMES CURRIE."

"Liverpool, March 23. 1788.

"MY DEAR ——,

"I thank you for the care you have taken of 'The African,' which, I dare say, will appear in the *World* in due season, though Mr. Topham has not yet found room for its inser-

tion. The reason why I wished it published without delay is this: I gave it to Dibdin to set, under promise of secrecy, and I find rumours have gone out that there is such a poem, which our polite negro-dealers would impute to the author as an unpardonable offence; therefore I wished it printed in London without delay, that its origin may be traced no higher than the paper in which it appears. You mistake in ascribing it to me, and I must let you into the secret of its production.

"One evening in company with a few friends, men of genius, I mentioned that the African trade, so much the subject of general discussion, afforded a good subject for a song; and that a good song might be no bad succour to the general cause of humanity and virtue. . . . I therefore urged a gentleman present to undertake something of the kind, to which he gave a half consent. Going home after supper, I found my ideas busy on the subject, and sitting down, I struck off six stanzas before I slept.

"I figured a negro in the hold of a ship in chains, his companions sleeping around him, awake in the middle of the night, and bursting into a soliloquy on his wretched condition, somewhat in imitation of Queen Mary, thus: —

" My sighs pierce the silence of night,
The tears from my eyes overflow;
As I think, I grow wild with affright,
And my heart seems to burst with its woe, &c. &c.

" When I reviewed this subject in the morning I found, as I thought, strength and pathos in several of the thoughts, but that the circumstances were too uniformly sombre, and the *place* too confined, to admit of sufficient softness and variety for a *popular song*, and such a one as women would like. Therefore I brought Maraton on deck. Having got him there, I was interrupted by the arrival of my friend with a finished song on the subject. It was almost entirely a love tale, and wanted character, having nothing appropriate in that respect to the traffic in question; in other respects it was very beautiful, but the measure was different from mine as well as the plan. Being hurried, and despairing of being able to finish my own scheme, I gave my plan, my stanzas, and my sketch to my friend, desiring him to make use of them as he pleased, and at any rate to point his own song better. In a day or two he returned me a sheet of paper, containing a long poem of not less than eighty lines, in which he had introduced all my lines without alteration, and had added most of his own. There was an incon-

gruity in the piece, as you may imagine, and therefore, at the desire of my valuable friend, I curtailed, new arranged, and altered it to the state you see. To tell you what is mine, what not, would be impossible; I may, perhaps, be entitled to one half of the merit, not more. The seizing of him is mine, and stands as at first; it is contained in the fourth and fifth stanzas: the last stanza is also mine. It would amuse you to see the different steps of this business, which, from first to last, were included in three days, or four at most. In finishing it, I was under the necessity of rejecting a great deal, merely for the sake of confining the whole to the length of a song; and this leads me to your objection. The ghost was originally imagined a real one; and, in addition to the speech which appears, prolonged her discourse as follows: —

> "From the hour that they tore us apart,
> No peace hath this breast ever known;
> Nor could torments nor death move a heart,
> That for Maraton languish'd alone.

This, perhaps, would have obviated your remark, because it points out that she had died actually of grief. But, for my own part, I did not like a ghost being so talkative, and thought it better to cut short the discourse, for the sake

of brevity and beauty, conceiving that the obscurity which might thus arise, was not ill suited to the character of such a shadowy being. But, however, if this song attracts any notice, in the second edition it shall have a circumstance thrown in somewhere about the sixth stanza, to account for the notion he entertains of Adila's death, and then the ghost may be conceived a creature of imagination.

"The following stanza would have appeared immediately before the last, had it not been for the necessity of being short, and that there appeared a propriety in the resolution he had taken being speedily carried into effect. Still I am partial to it, because it brings the business more home to the slave-trade: —

> "Ye companions who shared my sad fate,
> Where in darkness and bondage ye lie,
> Like Maraton's, short be your date,
> May death soon your fetters untie!"

Tell me what you think of this.

"Having said so much of my coadjutor, I will add that he is the author of the 'Wrongs of Africa,' the second part of which has just appeared, in which you will see something resembling the ballad. I recommend it to your notice, as being much superior to the first. The per-

sonification of despair is one of the most sublime thoughts in modern poetry.

"The general discussion of the slavery of the negroes has produced much unhappiness in Liverpool. Men are awaking to their situation, and the struggle between interest and humanity has made great havoc in the happiness of many families. If I were to attempt to tell you the history of my own transactions in this business, I should consume more time than I can spare. Altogether I have felt myself more interested, and less happy than is suited to my other avocations. The attempts that are continually made to justify this gross violation of the principles of justice, one cannot help repelling; and at the same time it is dreadful to hold an argument, where, if your opponent is convinced, he must be made miserable.

"A little scoundrel, a Spanish Jesuit, has advanced to the assistance of the slave-merchants, and has published a vindication of this traffic from the Old Testament. His work is extolled as a prodigy by these judges of composition; and is, in truth, no bad specimen of his talents, though egregiously false and sophistical, as all justifications of slavery must be. I have prompted a clergyman, a friend of mine, to answer him, by telling him that if such be religion, I

would 'none o'nt.' Whatever be the issue of the present efforts for a parliamentary abolition of the slave-trade, much good, I am persuaded, will be done by the discussion of the subject. We shall, in future, find fewer persons so abandoned in their modes of reasoning and practice towards the unhappy negroes as many now are, for there is something in the censure of man, which the greatest villain dreads, and does much to avoid. It likewise gives one a better opinion of the present generation, to find that they can be roused by the pure dictates of humanity, independent of all party questions or distinctions; and there can be no doubt that sooner or later the voice of freedom and truth will exert itself on this subject with irresistible influence. Priestley, who spent an evening with me lately, is of opinion that no effort even of the humblest individual is ever lost. Let there be but agitation of any question, and the interests of truth and virtue are promoted; — no matter in what direction the motion comes, let there *be* motion, that is enough: the tide-mill goes equally whether the water runs with the flood or the ebb. This is a great man, and a most agreeable one.

"I write in much haste. Trench is just come to take his Sunday's supper as usual — he de-

sires his love. Fare you well, and be you happy.

"My dear ——,

"Yours always,

"JAMES CURRIE."

"(Keep silence.)"

These letters were written in all the open and careless confidence of affection, and were never intended to be seen but by the young friend to whom they were addressed. They may, however, not be the less interesting to the reader, who will make due allowance for a few unceremonious expressions which occur.

In 1786, Dr. Currie was made one of the Physicians to the Liverpool Infirmary, an institution which always received his most zealous support and attention. The Report for 1788 was drawn up by him, and in it may be found the following passages: —

"In the scale of human existence, there is a large class whose inheritance must be poverty. To such men, their daily labour is their daily bread; and health, which to the rich is essential to pleasure, is to them necessary to subsistence. For the distress and misery of the poor, which are often inevitable, the provision made by Providence is the charity infused into the hearts of their fellow-creatures; a virtue which, by the

goodness of Heaven, brings in its exercise its own reward. To the indigent the sentiments of compassion may, indeed, be painful; but to the affluent they are the source of the purest pleasures of our nature: — pleasures, whose indulgence is sanctioned by reason, and blessed with the peculiar privilege of attracting the favour of God and man. He, therefore, who is able to assist the children of sorrow, and refuses his aid, counteracts the scheme of Providence, prefers the possession to the enjoyment of riches, and absorbs the stream of affluence he was intended to diffuse. He who shuts his ear to the voice of affliction forgets the tenure of his own existence, and has not learned to look forward to that awful change that shall strip him of the gifts of fortune, that shall mingle him with the lowest of his fellow-creatures, and bring him naked before the tribunal of his God."

"It is not to be denied that the limits of the human understanding, and the frequent depravity of the human heart, render the proper exercise of charity, in many instances, a duty of some difficulty. Idleness may try to support itself under the garb of indigence, and profligacy assume the accents of affliction; but such objections cannot be used against an asylum of poverty and sickness, which offers no temptation

to deceit, nor admits of its practice, and which is equally recommended by the voice of nature, the interests of society, and the precepts of Revelation. The positive advantages of such institutions have been frequently and fully enumerated; but it may be added that the blessings they diffuse, extend beyond the relief administered within their walls. The certainty that there is a refuge provided in the extremity of distress, darts a ray of light into the retreats of poverty and sickness; and invigorates the exertions of the honest heart, labouring under misfortune, and bravely contending against a 'sea of troubles.'

* * * * *

"To point out the merits of those individuals who have contributed so generously to the support of this Charity, would be an easy and pleasing task. But there is a delicacy which accompanies genuine benevolence, that must not be wounded. Charity would lose its name, if it arose not from higher motives than human favour, and looked not to nobler objects than mortal praise."

In the midst of the various passions, to which the discussions in and out of parliament respecting the slave-trade gave birth in Liverpool, there was much of that benevolence and philan-

thropy existing, which was prompt to forward every local object at least, where the interests of charity were concerned. In 1789, a proposal was made to erect a Lunatic Asylum in connection with the Infirmary, and a public meeting of the subscribers to this institution unanimously recommended its adoption to the benevolent support of the public. On this occasion Dr. Currie took a leading part. He also wrote two letters in favour of the measure, which were published at the time, and much admired; and having been frequently asked for, were subsequently appended by him to his Medical Reports. In that work, however, from its professional nature, they are not likely to be seen by general readers, and are, therefore, now reprinted.* The Asylum was erected in the following year.

But the philanthropic exertions of Dr. Currie were not restricted to matters of local interest; his sympathy extended to whatever affected the rights and happiness of his fellow-creatures. In the year 1790, the Dissenters throughout the kingdom made a general application to parliament for the repeal of those obnoxious laws, the Corporation and Test Acts. Resolutions on the subject were passed unanimously by the Dis-

* Appendix, No. 4.

senters of Liverpool, which were drawn up by Dr. Currie, whose friends and connections lay very much among that body, and which were received with respect, even by those who were strongly opposed to the repeal. They were distinguished for the moderation of temper and language in which they were expressed, and were formed on his declared opinion that "the grounds of universal toleration were those only which were capable of being maintained: that these, therefore, should be asserted openly; but that whatever arguments were employed should admit the propriety of an established form of worship, and should point out the repeal of the acts in question as perfectly consistent with the safety of the existing establishment: that all intemperance of expression should be avoided; that the profoundest respect for the constitution should be *avowed;* that every mode of influencing the opinions of public men, except the conviction of their understanding, should be *disavowed;* and that all appearance of fiery zeal or factious combination should be studiously avoided."

These resolutions were noticed from the pulpit, by a clergyman of the Church of England*, in a neighbouring town. The sermon was after-

* The Rev. E. Owen of Warrington.

wards published, and produced a letter to that gentleman from Dr. Currie, who thought that they had been treated by him in a manner which they did not deserve. On receipt of a reply, full of candour and good feeling, as honourable to the individual as becoming to the occasion, Dr. Currie wrote as follows, on the 24th of February, 1790:—

"After the open and handsome manner in which you have expressed yourself to an unknown correspondent, you were entitled to an immediate return of confidence, and I should not have delayed acknowledging your letter a single post, had not a melancholy event in my family put it out of my power. Even at present I am ill qualified for the task I am undertaking. If I write unconnectedly, have the goodness to excuse me, for I do not write by choice; but I can no longer delay assuring you that I have received pleasure from your notice, and that the politeness of your expressions, but more especially the candour of your sentiments, has affected me with an agreeable surprise.

"I am a Scotsman by birth: I was bred in the established religion of my country, and am the son of a clergyman of that establishment. You will easily believe me, therefore, when I say, that I hold the clerical character in high

respect, and that I agree with you that 'some established form of worship and moral instruction is necessary to keep up the religious spirit in the kingdom.' I object only to articles of faith. Why might not Christianity be established without any other explanation than what is found in the Gospel itself? Or, if articles of faith must be ascertained by the state, why may not these articles be confined to those few important doctrines which have a real influence on moral conduct, and in which all Christians are agreed; such as the belief in the being and attributes of God, and in a future state of retribution?

"I am pleased to think that the subject will come to issue in parliament so shortly. After this, the fears of the Church will subside, and the business fall into a temporary repose. Undoubtedly, it will come on again and again; and God knows what degrees of malice, hatred, and uncharitableness may be generated in the contest. I should hope, however, that when the question is perfectly understood, the claim of the Dissenters will appear in no respect dangerous, and that the friends of the establishment will find it most prudent to give way. I solemnly declare it is my opinion (though I earnestly wish the issue may be favourable to the maxims of complete liberty of conscience), that *defeat* will

be more advantageous to what is called the 'Dissenting Interest' than success. The zeal of the lay sectaries, now so languid, will be revived by repeated discussions, and inflamed by repeated defeats. The Church of England will be represented as more intolerant than the Church of Scotland or the Church of Ireland; and France, a Catholic country, will be held out as truly enlightened, where an Englishman, who believes not in the thirty-nine articles, may enjoy perfect freedom of conscience, without the forfeiture of any civil right. For a season, these suggestions may prove ineffectual; but *it appears to me* that they will gradually produce increase of conviction, and that the Church of England will be injured and discredited by a needless opposition to liberty, and a fruitless contest with truth. On the other hand, the repeal of the acts in question will no more endanger the national establishment of England, *in my humble opinion*, than that of Hindoostan; and, by such a measure, the bond which at present unites the Dissenters, will be finally dissolved. Every increase of toleration hitherto has diminished their numbers, and by the completion of toleration they will, doubtless, diminish still farther. Fiery zeal cannot exist without opposition: it is by the *collision* of bigots that

bigotry is chiefly kept up. The very men who, under persecution, would endure flames and tortures rather than abandon their peculiar opinions, become gradually indifferent to them when they may enjoy them freely, and not seldom renounce them from the smallest temptations of ambition, or even from the frivolous desire of conformity to fashion.—But I wander unintentionally into the wide field of argument.

"I pray God that Christian charity may soon be universal and complete; that religion may never be made the pretext to cover the designs of guilty ambition, or the unprincipled selfishness and jealousy of those already in power.

"Heaven forbid that a question that can only be discussed by argument and reason should be decided by the *opposition* of mad enthusiasts; or that those shameful times should return, when, for the sake of articles of faith that are beyond human comprehension, *beings of a day* imbrued their hands in each other's blood, and men reduced themselves below infernal spirits in wickedness, and below the brutes in folly! Such days are, I hope, for ever passed.

"In many of the opinions I have offered, perhaps in most of them, you will not concur. No matter: if ever we meet, I doubt not we shall meet with generous sentiments of each other,

and I shall receive from you the liberal allowance I am disposed to give. Life is short and full of sorrow;—why should its fleeting moments be farther embittered by party prejudice or bigoted zeal?

> ' ——— Omnia functa
> Aut moritura vides, obeunt noctesque diesque
> Astraque, nec solidis prodest sua machina terris.'

"When your letter arrived, my little daughter was dying; she was carried off in less than twenty-four hours' illness. My wife and son have since been ill, and cannot be said to be yet recovered. I have myself been a good deal indisposed, both in body and mind.

"Let these circumstances excuse the delay of my writing, and the manner in which I now write.

"I am, with respect,
"Your very obedient servant,
"JAMES CURRIE."

The two individuals concerned in the above correspondence have long since descended into the grave: happy, had they been spared to witness the triumph of legislative justice and sound policy, which, when least expected, has at length been accomplished!

Amongst those friends whom Dr. Currie had the happiness to possess, there was none with whom he lived in habits of greater intimacy

than Mr. Roscoe, or to whom he was more strongly attached. Their friendship was cemented by a common taste for literature and intellectual pursuits, and by the congeniality of their sentiments on many important subjects which affect the welfare of the human race. In after-life, their names became associated in the literary world. Few strangers of eminence arrived at Liverpool without an introduction to Mr. Roscoe and Dr. Currie; and their houses were the resort of men of learning and celebrity from all quarters. In closest intimacy and friendship with them lived Mr. William Rathbone, a man, for whose generous ardour in the cause of civil and religious liberty, native eloquence, fearless vindication of the oppressed, public spirit, and extensive charity, they both felt equal respect and admiration.

The different incidents of Dr. Currie's life were sometimes noticed by the friendly and ready muse of Mr. Roscoe. On the domestic calamity alluded to in the preceding letter to Mr. Owen, which had been aggravated by the loss of an infant son the week before, he wrote the following lines: —

TO DR. CURRIE,

ON THE DEATH OF HIS CHILDREN.

Life's cheerful day when sudden sorrow shrouds,
And dark misfortune rolls her night of clouds,

Robs the gay prospect of its brightest charms,
O'erwhelms with sadness, and with fear alarms;
Then, like the bird of eve that darkling sings,
Her pensive aid the muse unbidden brings,
Pours through the gloom her soul-dissolving strain,
And soothes to softer woe the sense of pain.
But not the magic power of song is mine,
That steeps the list'ning soul in sounds divine;
Else should my happiest art thy sorrows calm,
And o'er thine anguish pour its healing balm.
Nor, Currie, shall affection's hope be vain,
That longs to join thee in thine hour of pain;
If fancy smile not, friendship shall impart
Th' impassion'd words that touch the kindred heart,
The social glow that seeks its share of grief,
And, by participation, brings relief. —

With ceaseless course as down the stream we sweep,
That soon resigns us to the boundless deep,
Ere yet our fragile barks submit to fate,
What dangers threaten, and what ills await!
Ah! see the foes of man — a dreadful band —
Ride on the waves and crowd along the strand!
Their deadly weapons Heaven's own hands supply
The sweeping tempest, and the fire-charg'd sky;
The insidious rock, the poison-breathing wind,
Earth, air, and ocean, in our fate conjoin'd.
Already see the wasteful war begun —
Ere yet the midway of our course be run,
Some piercing wound our sinking heart appals,
Close at our side some lov'd companion falls.
— 'Twas thus in health's high bloom, and youth elate,
My Rigby yielded to his early fate,
And, from my parent grasp untimely torn,
Yet one dear object of my cares I mourn.

Nor thou, my friend, a kinder lot must know,
— Too often doom'd to taste the cup of woe!
Two cherub forms thy fond regrets deplore,
That smil'd and glided past, to glad thine eyes no more.
Light hovering thus in visions of the night,
Celestial beings glance before our sight,
Soothe with their songs of bliss our hours of sleep,
Till cheerless morning bids us wake and weep.
Thus, whilst we bow beneath affliction's dart,
Domestic sorrows wring the bleeding heart; —
But not for thee, my friend, the lot to know
The ceaseless wailings of a woman's woe. —
From partial ills thy brooding thoughts recall,
And trace the changes of this earthly ball;
Mark there the effects of nature's endless strife,
The embryo atoms struggling into life —
See from its constant source eternal glides
The vital stream, and rolls its ample tides —
See Afric's sable branch profusely runs,
And gluts th' unnatural thirst of Europe's whiter sons!
Then tow'rds yon lonely plains direct thy sight,
Once throng'd with life and echoing with delight;
But silent now, the mirthful hour is past,
And a whole nation lies and whitens in the blast. * —
When views like these th' excursive thoughts employ,
How vain each partial woe, each transient joy!
Lost like the taper in the noon-day beam,
Or the scant tear amidst the boundless stream.
— Nor o'er *our* heads may many suns return,
When we, my friend, may share the lot we mourn —
Still in the dust this busy hand shall lie,
Dim in its socket rest thy tracing eye:
Meantime whate'er of life its AUTHOR spares,
Give we to gen'rous aims and social cares;

* Vide Bruce's Travels in Abyssinia.

That when we rest in chill oblivion cold,
And o'er our ashes numerous years have roll'd,
Some happy effort may survive the tomb,
Pregnant with bliss to beings yet to come.

Soon afterwards, the following sonnet was addressed by Mr. Roscoe to his friend: —

SONNET TO DR. CURRIE.

As o'er the blue expanse of summer's sky
Pass the light vapours that return no more,
As on the margin of the breezy shore
Waves after waves successive rise and die;
Thus pass the transient race of human kind,
That, sweeping onward towards oblivion's gloom,
Yield unreluctant to their cheerless doom,
Nor of existence leave a trace behind!
Yet, Currie, some there are of loftier aim,
That spurn th' inglorious lot, and feel within
The ardent hope that pants for public praise;
Anxious, like thee, with well deserved acclaim
From glory's shrine her greenest wreath to win,
And bid their memory live to future days.

In 1790, Mr. Roscoe and Dr. Currie commenced a series of Essays in the *Liverpool Weekly Herald*, under the title of *The Recluse*, which, however, was not continued beyond twenty articles. The greater number of these were written by Mr. Roscoe: of those contributed by Dr. Currie, two have been selected, and are

now * reprinted. The first consists of an Essay on the mode of giving advice to others; the second is a beautiful allegory, after the manner of the Vision of Mirza. †

In the midst of these lighter occasional occupations, and of his more serious professional engagements, Dr. Currie found time to take an interest in every great public question, which engaged the attention of his fellow-townsmen. In 1792, Liverpool and other principal towns in Great Britain commenced that struggle for the opening of the trade to India, the prosecution of which was unfortunately retarded by the memorable commercial distresses of the following year. On this occasion a public meeting unanimously adopted and passed a series of resolutions and petition, which were drawn up by

* Appendix, No. 5.

† By a memorandum in Dr. Currie's writing, the following subjects were intended by him to form future papers of The Recluse: —

On the Spirit of a Man of Letters.
Character of Swift.
——— Addison.
——— Hume.
——— Johnson.
——— Jebb, and Shakspeare.
On the Heroine's Character in Novels.
On the Hero's do.
That the Minority will often be in the right.

Dr. Currie. Expressed in perspicuous language, they are distinguished by the great general principles advanced, and the powerful arguments by which these are supported. At a subsequent period (in 1812), when the opening of the India trade was again more successfully agitated, they were re-published by the parties then engaged in this national undertaking.

While Dr. Currie's talents were thus exerted out of the immediate sphere of his profession, his medical reputation was at the same time steadily increasing. In 1790 he had been elected a member of the London Medical Society, when he wrote a paper on Tetanus and Convulsive Disorders, which was published in their Transactions.* And in the present year (1792) he was chosen a Fellow of the Royal Society, and also of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh. On the first of these occasions, he communicated a very curious "Account of the remarkable Effects of a Shipwreck," which appears in the Transactions† of the learned body in question, and which contains the groundwork of his *Medical Reports* on the Affusion of Cold Water in Fever and other Disorders, which he subsequently gave to the world.

* Memoirs of the London Medical Society, vol. iii. p. 147.

† Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, for 1792, vol. i. p. 199.

In the early part of this year, Dr. Currie paid a visit to his native county, in which he had made a purchase of some land, in the neighbourhood of Moffat. It had been suggested to him, that the river of that name, passing through a part of this estate, presented an admirable site for the erection of a cotton mill, the establishment of which would prove highly beneficial to his property. Determined to see on the spot how far this suggestion was deserving of attention, he visited Scotland, and took the opportunity of obtaining the advice of an individual, of all others best qualified to give it, the celebrated Mr. David Dale of Lanark. On his return to Liverpool, he gave an account of his visit to Lanark Mills, in the following letter to some intimate friends at Manchester.* It contains an eloquent tribute to that philanthropic and judiciously benevolent individual, who will ever be remembered as a benefactor to his country, and whose name, as connected with the Lanark Mills, is not so prominent at the present day as it deserves to be.

* Mrs. Greg and Miss Kennedy, other letters to whom will be found in the present collection.

Liverpool, 27th May, 1792.

"My dear Friends,

"I said I would write from Dumcrief, but it was impossible; I ought to have written sooner, since my return, but that has hardly been in my power. I will not now speak of my journey, but relate such particulars as dwell most upon my recollection.

"I got to Carlisle on Sunday night, and there being no public carriage ready to go forward, I slept there; next morning I breakfasted with Archdeacon Paley *, of whom more hereafter; and about noon, in a post-chaise, and alone, I crossed the river Sark, which divides the sister kingdoms. Every spot of the country from Carlisle forward is as familiar to me as the road to the Park; and though I saw old friends in the

* Writing a few months afterwards to one of his friends in Scotland, he expresses himself as follows respecting Paley:—"With this amiable and excellent man I spent part of a day and the whole of a *summer* night, in the beginning of May, and I do not know that I ever spent an equal portion of time with more satisfaction. If you should meet him, you will see an English clergyman to the best advantage; for I believe it is universally allowed that the Church at present produces no such other. He is not, however, likely to be a bishop. Pitt knows him, and of course respects him; but he has given up the patronage of the Church to the King, who always, of late at least, promotes Orthodoxy and Toryism."—29th Aug. 1792.

objects around me with new faces, yet I must confess their countenances were generally improved. In half an hour I passed the house where I was born, at about a hundred yards' distance, and in an hour more I was at Springkell. Sir William Maxwell was not at home; he was gone to a county meeting for the purpose of considering of a reform of parliament; but Lady Maxwell was there, and her son-in-law, by whom I was most kindly received. Sir William returned in the evening.

"I staid all night at Springkell, and on Tuesday, the 1st of May, proceeded to the next stage on horseback, my host accompanying me. I got into a chaise at Ecclefechan (there's a name to break your teeth), and at three got to Moffat. The country at first rises fast, but is not any where mountainous. Heavy showers of sleet and rain, gleams of sunshine, and a sweeping east wind, welcomed me to the object of my visit. You cannot think how beautiful the house and valley of Dumcrief looked from the bridge as I passed: sheltered by the woods and mountains, it seemed to enjoy a perfect calm. I saw a great crowd of people in the court, so I did not drive up as I intended; and I was glad of this afterwards, for I found they were selling the goods of the inhabitants (a brother's family of the late

proprietor ——) by public auction. Hearing this, I kept away that afternoon. I met at Moffat some friends from Edinburgh and Dumfries, who were waiting for me; and in about an hour after we arrived, my sister from Edinburgh, who, hearing I was to be there on that day, had set off to meet me. We took lodgings next morning, and kept house together the five following days. On Wednesday I was up by break of day, and you can form no notion of my alacrity. What though the morning was lowering, and the wind blew from the east? what cared I for the wind? it shouted in my ears without being heeded.

"I mounted a horse that had been provided for me, and in half an hour was on the top of Hunter-heck hill. This is an eminence (in Lancashire it would be a mountain) that rises on the northernmost point of the estate of Dumcrief, and from which I could see the whole as distinctly as if every part was at my feet. I found that this property of mine was a peninsula, bounded by two beautiful rivers (Moffat and Annan) on each side, and terminated by their junction to the south. The banks of these rivers, especially the former, I found well wooded; and several eminences besides, enclosed and covered with trees.

"The mountain on which I stood was per-

fectly verdant and covered with sheep; forming a striking contrast with the huge, black and frowning Alps that rose around it across the valleys, and hid their heads in the clouds. About two miles to the south, almost concealed from the view by surrounding wood, I saw the house of Dumcrief; and having surveyed it with striking emotions of pleasure, without approaching it, I returned to Moffat to breakfast. You cannot think how I felt my sensations lightened by this mountain air. I was braced in body and mind, and felt that care and sorrow passed me on either side.

"After breakfast I went out again, a friend with me, and a farmer who served as a guide. We now approached the house, but not directly, for the people being a sort of savages, I did not wish to come on them at once. I took a turn or two in the wood within their sight, to show them that I was a Christian, and sent a message, hoping it would not be inconvenient to them if I should call. I was following the messenger, when he returned and informed me that the father and mother had fled, at my approach, over the hill to Moffat; that the sons were flying, though we had a glance at them as they went off; and the poor daughter, who could not get ready in time, had locked herself up in the house, and

was not to be seen. One room only was open; they had locked up the rest.

"The house is an old house, with walls cannon proof: there is one modern room, a very fine one; another tolerable, and nine bed-rooms. I speak from what I saw afterwards, when I had convinced these people that I was a harmless sort of man. Before the door, there is a lawn about the size of a large bowling-green, and used as such in Sir George Clerk's time, surrounded by trees of perhaps 200 years old. On one of these hangs a bell to ring the family to dinner, and perhaps to prayers, on which I saw '1612,' with a cross above it, marking a Catholic origin.

"I cannot describe the beauties about the house, out of the windows of which you see the river Moffat winding along at your feet, and may plunge, if you please, into his transparent stream. The opposite banks are finely wooded, and a Chinese bridge is thrown across.

"Above the house is a mill for grinding corn, which some would call a defect, but which I call a beauty; and above that, the garden, in certainly the most singularly romantic situation that can well be conceived. On the one side it is bounded by the river, which is here banked in, but without any wall; and on the other, by the side of a hill covered with impenetrable wood. The river

here making a sudden bend, you are entirely shut out from the house, &c., below; the woods exclude you to the south and west; but to the east and north-east there is a view surpassing in beauty and sublimity, consisting of the windings of this stream, of the plains beyond it, of the gradually ascending hills, at first green and covered with sheep, and towering upwards to the top of Hartfell, about ten miles distant, and rising perpendicularly above 3000 feet. The garden itself is laid out in a very fine taste; and when you examine its boundary towards the wood, you find it made by another river, which glides through the trees, and which is no other than the stream which drives the mill below, taken off from the Moffat above the garden. I could not but admire the genius as well as taste, shown in converting this deformity, as some would call it, into a beauty of the first order; and while I examined it, I could not but apostrophise the spirit of Sir George Clerk, the former owner of this property, and the planner of its improvements, who died about eight years ago, and who, if departed ghosts are ever suffered to review this world, may perhaps sometimes wander among the groves he loved.

"By this time I hear you cry out, 'Enough of Dumcrief and your inanimate beauties; — have

you no living things to talk of?' My dear friends! — every thing in order: if you put me out of my way, I shall be as bad as the nurse to Juliet. Well, then: I staid at Moffat till Friday evening at nine o'clock; at that hour I took the stage-coach, and travelling all night over the mountains that divide Annandale from Clydesdale, arrived at Lanark. There I met Mr. Dale, by appointment; for having forwarded the letter from Mr. Dinwiddie, in one of my own, I had received an answer that morning, saying that he should be at his great works on the Clyde (that was not his expression, you may be sure,) on Saturday, and would be glad to see me there.

"From Mr. Dale I met such a reception as I wished, — I passed the whole day with him, dined with him *tête-à-tête*, and returned to Moffat in the night. I do not know that I have ever received a gratification more pure, or more rational, than this day produced. The spot where the mills stand is eminently beautiful, immediately under the falls of the Clyde, where the whole river precipitates itself a hundred feet perpendicular.

"The mills themselves are wonderful objects. These are five in number, each calculated for six thousand spindles. They form a range along the banks of the Clyde; and on a line with them,

on the side of the hill, are the houses of the manufacturers, containing nearly two thousand souls. The utmost cleanliness, health, and order, pervaded the whole manufactory. The children looked cheerful and happy, with rosy cheeks and chubby countenances; and I found a variety of excellent regulations established for health, morals, and knowledge. It astonished me to find that the whole of this was a creation of Mr. Dale's within the last six years. That term is not yet elapsed, since there was not the vestige of human improvement within a mile of the spot I mention. Whoever wishes to see a combination of the wonders of nature and art, of beauty and sublimity, of magnitude and order, of patriotism and private interest, of power and benevolence, — let him repair to the falls of the Clyde, and do homage to this singular man.

" Mr. Dale is a man of the greatest plainness and simplicity; has a good understanding, a perfect command of temper, an enthusiastic boldness of design, with great perseverance of execution, and a mind that seems to embrace greatness of conception with minuteness of detail.

" These are the rare spirits that seldom fail of success; and Mr. Dale, I should apprehend, is at the head of these both in merit and fortune.

Though I obtained nothing immediate from him, I gained something in his acquaintance, and still more in the liberty of corresponding with him; and the promise of his advice, though not co-operation in any of my schemes. Mr. Dale did not seem discouraged by the present stagnation in the cotton business. He thought the scheme almost certain of success with good management, but every thing depended on that. He discouraged me from engaging in the business with any persons, whatever their fortune or character might be, that did not understand it, or could not devote themselves to it. In a word, I found many difficulties in my way, which time perhaps may remove.*

"I have, since my return, found a dangerous fastidiousness, I know not how to call it, creeping on me. I do my best to repel it, and succeed. But, having been troubled with severe headaches, I have indulged myself for two nights past in sleeping in the country; and here I am sitting all alone on Sunday evening, at half after

* On the 9th of July, 1798, Mr. Dale wrote to Dr. Currie as follows: — "I have been rather indifferent in my health for some time past, and I wish much to retire from business but I am afraid that I shall not get the works easily disposed of. I would not wish to dispose of them to any person that would not follow out the plan I have laid down for preserving the health and morals of the children."

eleven, consuming your patience (or rather preparing a trial for it) and my own time, in a letter which your friendship will excuse. . . .

. . . . . .

"My very dear friends, adieu!

"JAMES CURRIE."

However disposed to devote himself to professional or literary pursuits, the period was now arrived, when it was impossible for a man of keen sensibility and deep reflection, to exclude the impression of public events from his thoughts; and for some time, the attention of Dr. Currie was absorbed by the rapidly-passing occurrences in a neighbouring kingdom, and their probable consequences on the fortunes of England. When perseverance in the war with France had been determined upon, in opposition, as he conceived, to the true interests of his country, he published the celebrated Letter from *Jasper Wilson* to Mr. Pitt *, which appeared in June, 1793, and of which it is said ten thousand copies were sold. But in order properly to estimate the value of

* "A Letter, commercial and political, addressed to the Right Hon. William Pitt, in which the real Interests of Britain are considered, and some Observations are offered on the general State of Europe: by Jasper Wilson, Esq.—London, 1793."

this pamphlet, and to understand the peculiar circumstances which attended its appearance, it is necessary to be well acquainted with the complexion of that period; and the following observations will not, it is hoped, be considered an inappropriate introduction to its history. They are chiefly taken from an unfinished MS. sketch that Dr. Currie left, which is without date, and which follows: —

SKETCH.

It would be the height of injustice not to acknowledge that the nation has been led into an approbation of the present war; and that some good understandings and many excellent hearts, misled by false terrors and by virtuous sympathies, have most heartily concurred in it.

When the grand crisis of human society in which we are now placed, shall have passed over, and the historian of a future age, in the bosom of peace and tranquillity, shall recount the events of the present, he will perhaps conclude with reflections such as these: —

"At this distance of time it seems extraordinary that a nation, so enlightened as England appears to have been towards the end of the eighteenth century, enabled by her situation, and called on by every dictate of sound policy, to

keep aloof from the contentions of the belligerent powers, — it must appear extraordinary that such a nation, scarcely recovered from a bloody and disastrous war with her own colonies, should have again plunged headlong into a war with France, and far outstripped the powers originally engaged in it, in her sacrifices, her zeal, and her perseverance. The causes which contributed to this singular illusion, appear to have been of various kinds. England, though a country at all times attached to freedom, had been remarkable, ever since the era of the Reformation, for the bitterness of its theological factions, which, as is usual in such cases, connected themselves with the corresponding parties in the state. The dissenters, a class of men active, industrious, and enlightened, were, from education and situation, peculiarly attached to the democratic part of the constitution, and ranged themselves with the Whigs, at that time in the opposition, and, of course, maintaining doctrines favourable to liberty. With many valuable qualities, the dissenters could not escape the prejudices of their situation. They were sectaries, and consequently disposed to give their peculiar opinions an importance beyond what they deserved. This sect had lost their popularity with the great body of the nation, from their refinements on

the popular doctrines of faith, and from the controversy carried on so long, so ably, and so vehemently, by the celebrated Priestley, the first philosopher of his age, who, however, preferred to this character, that of a preacher and leader in the sect in which he was educated. The declared object of his attack was the religious establishment of his own and of every other country; and the doctrine which he particularly disputed, was that which respected, not the nature and attributes, but the essence, of the Supreme Being, — a subject far removed beyond human comprehension, but which, from its awful mysteriousness and sublime nature, has, in all ages, deeply affected the imagination and engaged the passions of men — and which, whenever long or vehemently agitated, has not only excited the most malignant prejudices, but generally produced a vast effusion of human blood.

"The conduct of a man so able, so learned, so scientific, so virtuous as Priestley, could not fail to affect the sect of which he was so distinguished an ornament. It cast an odium over the whole. In this situation of things, a motion was brought into parliament for a repeal of the sacramental test, — a measure calculated to put the dissenters on a level with their brethren of the Church, as to the enjoyment of all offices, civil

and military. The motion was at first thrown out by a small majority; but, being repeatedly brought forward and urged with much pertinacity, great warmth was generated in the course of the contest, and the spirit of religious zeal began to resume all its former bitterness.

"To a motion so reasonable as the removing of civil disabilities inflicted for religious belief, it is evident that the enlightened of every persuasion could not but give their assent; and, indeed, the objections urged against the measure by its adversaries, were founded, not on the general principles of justice or policy, but on the expediency and, indeed, necessity of the particular case; it being confidently asserted, that the persons, who would be admitted into office by the proposed repeal, were inimical to the constitution of government, and would use the influence of office to overturn it. To examine this assertion, either on general principles of reasoning or by comparing it with facts, would now be an useless undertaking; suffice it to say, that it had its influence at a time when the nation was heated by party zeal, and improbability did not operate against belief.

"At this time the Revolution of France, which has been productive of such extraordinary effects, began to engross the attention of all men in

England, and throughout Europe. An event such as this could not fail to interest, in a different manner, different descriptions of men, according to the prejudices of their situation. By the timid, it was received with distrust and fear; by the sanguine, with extravagant exultation; and by literary men in general, who considered it as the offspring of philosophy, with that sort of partiality, which men feel for the work of their own hands, and with that honest pride which the individual cherishes, when the consequence of the order to which he belongs, is honourably increased.

"By the dissenters the Revolution of France was welcomed more particularly, from a prejudice extremely natural. They had been refused the privileges of their fellow-subjects, by the rejection of the motion for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts *, and smarted under the wound inflicted on their honour. The French Revolution proclaimed universal freedom of conscience to all sects, foreigners as well as natives. Could it be long endured in England, that a large body of the most industrious and enlightened of the people should have privileges offer-

* A motion which was thought by many, however, and amongst others by Dr. Currie, to have been injudiciously pressed forward by that body, at a moment of such general excitement.

ed them in a foreign, and, till lately, in a hostile country, which were denied them in their native soil? This seemed improbable. In the liberality of France, the dissenters saw their opponents put to shame, and fondly anticipated the time, when such an example might restore them to all their rights."

"Hence proceeded that warm approbation of the opening Revolution of France, and the various public celebrations to which it gave birth; and hence, too, the reluctance of enlightened men of every sect to admit the growing enormities, by which it was speedily dishonoured, and by which the hopes entertained of its issue were, for a time, utterly obscured. The general information among the dissenters; the connection of their cause with the principles of universal toleration, so universally admitted among the friends of letters and liberty, of every description and every country; the approbation common to all such men of the downfall of despotism in France;—these circumstances enabled the high Church and Tory party in England to extend to their antagonists at large, the prejudice excited against dissenters from the Establishment. Liberty no longer wore the national uniform; she appeared in the livery of an unpopular sect.

"This fatal prejudice was carefully encouraged by the administration in their speeches in parliament, and still more through the medium of the press, at that time corrupt to a degree unknown even in the days of Sir Robert Walpole. The dreadful enormities committed in France were carefully detailed, and, where they admitted of exaggeration, magnified. Every species of appeal was made to the passions of the multitude: their senses were assailed by prints and pictures, representing the most bloody incidents of the tragedies acted in France*; their terrors were excited by obscure and fearful insinuations of domestic conspiracy; and at last, in the fulness of time, it was proclaimed in every corner of the kingdom, that a conspiracy actually existed in the

* (1829.) With less success, happily for the honour of the country and the tranquillity of the empire, similar arts have been played off at a recent period.

It has been shrewdly remarked by a friend of the writer, that the policy which it was the object of the letter of Jasper Wilson to oppose, has been productive of consequences, which were little *dreamt of in the philosophy* of those who espoused it, and so loudly called for war with France in 1793. Mr. Pitt saw that it was impossible to engage in the contest, leaving Ireland in the state of discontent, to which she was at that period a prey. The elective franchise was accordingly granted to the Roman Catholics of that kingdom; and this first step has, after the lapse of thirty-six years, been followed by the concession of Catholic emancipation. — *Editor.*

heart of the nation, and in the very seat of government, for the destruction of the king and the two houses of parliament, and the overthrow of the constitution. The alarm excited by this intelligence knew no bounds: men of good hearts, but simple understandings, gave it entire belief; and, not knowing where to find the guilty objects, fixed on all those who, at any period of the French Revolution, had expressed their hopes, or even their wishes, in its favour, and regarded them as parties to this detestable wickedness. Few men can, on such occasions, command their own prejudices. Their feelings become quickly interested, their imaginations excited and agitated, and the voice of reason is drowned in the storm of the passions. Never was this truth more clearly illustrated than on this occasion. The reader will observe with wonder and sorrow, that the very cause that produced the war, — the murder of the king of France, — was that which, in every view of the question, rendered it unnecessary. We dreaded the propagation of French principles; the horror which this act of blood occasioned in the heart of every Englishman was a mound against the adoption of these principles, such as no act of legislation could erect." *

* This consideration does not appear to have had its due

"By means, such as have been related, all opposition to the ministry was borne down, and men who saw the real danger—men who truly loved their country and its form of government—were obliged to witness in silence and anguish, the measures which led directly to a war of unparalleled danger, destruction, and disgrace."

"On this occasion, it may be useful to enquire whether ministers stirred up this ferment to serve their private views, or whether they themselves partook of the general delusion. It seems not unlikely that they were in some degree deceived. The practice of employing spies had been revived under the direction of a man, not actually in administration, but supposed to possess the ear of the King; a man well fitted by his character for this undertaking. A regular system of calumny appears also to have been carried on, under his patronage, against such as opposed the measures of government, and, more especially, the war; and no means were left untried, that were calculated to crush them. Ministers, it is probable, confided too much in the representations of this description of men; and were deceived, as is usual in all such cases, by the spies

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weight with the supporters of Mr. Pitt and the French war, in discussing this most important subject, either at the time, or at any subsequent period.—*Editor.*

they employed; and betrayed as well as dishonoured by the calumniators, whom they tolerated or encouraged. It is not, however, to be thought that they actually supposed the existence of internal conspiracies to the extent, which they affected to hold out in the houses of parliament. Many circumstances show that this could not have been the case: and had the English nation been at that time in a situation to use its reason, the rejection of the motions for an enquiry into the reality and nature of these conspiracies, made at different times by Fox and Sheridan, and pressed with the utmost eloquence and earnestness, might have produced instant conviction of the insincerity of administration. But by this time the passions of men were worked up into a phrensy of mistaken zeal; and in such a situation of things, 'the voice of reason,' as has been remarked by a celebrated historian *, 'could no more be heard, than a whisper in the midst of the most violent hurricane.' In the conduct of the war, the ministry of George III. had to encounter difficulties of the most serious nature. They had not only to contend with the force in the field, but to support their measures against the talents, judgment, and information of their own country. Reason, as was said by a celebrated orator of that day, was their enemy,

* Hume, when speaking of the Titus Oates plot.

and they opposed themselves to reason. Hence the declamations against enquiry, discussion, and innovation, with which their speeches abounded; and hence the ridicule and detestation, which they affected to cast on philosophers and philosophy, on the cultivators of knowledge and wisdom, and on the richest products of mind."

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From the preceding fragment, may be seen the general opinion which Dr. Currie had formed of the state of politics in this country at the period in question.

The public mind had been powerfully prepared for the views of ministers, and the alarms of the nation had been strongly excited, by the appearance, in 1790, of Mr. Burke's remarkable work on the French Revolution,—that splendid monument of an ardent imagination, rather than the calm composition of a philosopher and statesman. Warmly adopted by the landed and commercial aristocracy of England, it diffused through these classes a dread of change, in proportion to the vehement eloquence, with which the writer poured out his exaggerated alarms and his bitter invectives. This work produced *Paine's Rights of Man* in reply, which was as much admired by the commonalty, as Mr. Burke had been by men of rank and fortune. The *Rights of Man* gave

rise to numerous associations or clubs, composed principally of reading men of the lower ranks, and, in some cases, patronised by persons of a superior station. These clubs occasioned the re-action of the societies "for the suppression of republicans and levellers," set on foot by Mr. John Reeves. Both parties carried their principles to extremes: the one maintaining that the kingly power was the only essential part of the British constitution, and justifying every abuse, which had crept into the practice and administration of the latter; the other, in some cases, pushing their crude and impracticable ideas of reform to a most unjustifiable extent.

It should be observed that it was alleged by Mr. Reeves and his followers, that the reformers aimed at the subversion of civil society *for the sake of plunder;* and so prevalent did this idea become at the time, that persons who wished to be considered as men of property, were loud in their execration of every class of reformers.*

* By the subsequent trials of the reformers in 1794, much impropriety and much intemperance were discovered to have existed. Conduct was laid open (Dr. Currie has observed), that every wise government ought at all times to watch; and which, in perilous times, perhaps no good government would pass over. But no shadow nor trace of actual conspiracy could be found; the persons tried were universally acquitted; the numbers and influence of those

In these circumstances, and at this important juncture, the Duke of Portland and his friends separated themselves from Mr. Fox, who was left to contend for the principles of freedom at the head of a small but intrepid band. The friends of Opposition and the advocates of peace out of doors, felt themselves embarrassed for the want of some publication, which should express their ideas in a definite form. The doctrines of Paine it was altogether impossible for them to adopt; and they were besides held in check by the ruling fashion of the day, which considered opposition to ministry as synonymous with disloyalty to the king, and disaffection to the constitution.

It was at this crisis that Dr. Currie published *Jasper Wilson;* to which the following letter will serve as a further introduction;—

"*To Alexander Young, Esq., Edinburgh.*

"Liverpool, 6th February, 1793.

"Dear Sir,

"The accounts you give me of the Forth and Clyde canal are very full and complete. Please

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concerned in these societies, were found to be inconsiderable; and the idea of any serious plot having existed for the overthrow of the constitution, gradually sank into contempt. See State Trials for the year in question.—*Editor.*

to accept my best thanks, and my expressions of concern that I should have put you to such unexpected trouble.

"I read *The Patriot** with great pleasure, and, in general, with assent and approbation. Not knowing the state of the public mind in Scotland, I cannot judge how far the remedy is fitted to the disease. The pamphlet has the national characteristics, temperance and good sense. It has what may now be called a national characteristic also, correctness. The writer of it does not, like many of the opponents of Paine, attack his principles, but his science, or to speak in the language of the pulpit, his practical application, and thus avoids an idle and fruitless contention with self-evident truths.

"The truth is, Paine is right in his foundations. The object of government is the general good; the rule by which this is to be determined, the general will. The imperfection of our nature admits of nothing better. Government has its origin in our wants like other human inventions. Men build houses to secure themselves from the winds and the rain; they erect governments, to secure themselves from vice and violence. Both

* "*The Patriot*, addressed to the People on the present State of Affairs in Britain and France, with Observations on Republican Governments, and Discussions of the Principles advanced in the Writings of Thomas Paine. Edinburgh, 1793."

natural and political architecture are originally rude: experience, civilisation, and increasing wants improve the one and the other. This appears to me the simple account of the matter; and as the kind of house required depends on the situation of the individual and his family, as well as of the climate in which he lives, so also must the form of government be liable to variations, according to the condition of the nation over whom it is erected. What may be called good governments, therefore, admit of considerable variety of form as well as good houses, with this proviso, however, that as no house can be good that does not keep out the wind and the rain, so no government can be good that does not secure liberty and property. It is on this ground alone that Paine is vulnerable. The crazy fools that have attacked his principles of government, have knocked their heads against a stone wall.

"We contend that our constitution affords us all the most substantial benefits of government, and that what is wanting may be added. We will, therefore, not take down the building in order to build another in its place, at the risk of not being better lodged in the end, and under the certain inconvenience of being, in the mean time, exposed to the fury of the elements. What says Paine? He says you are fools; —

your constitution affords you no protection, — it is crazy and rotten, — pull it down, pull it down, it is too old to be repaired. We join issue at these points, and at the bar of truth and reason gain a verdict against him. In this part of his subject, Dr. Hardy is a very powerful and convincing advocate, and he very wisely makes this his principal ground of attack. I have seen nothing equal to him, as far as he confines himself to this view of the question.

" My assent to the other parts of the pamphlet is not equally unrestrained. The sort of indirect attempt to show that we have no right to change the constitution as settled at the Revolution, and the allusion to the baptismal vow of parents, made me smile. (See pp. 11, 12.) A nation has no right to do wrong certainly. But they do no more wrong in changing their government on proper motives, than a family does in building a new house, when the old one is falling about their ears. I allow that prudence will make all wise men apply this rule to practice with extreme caution, on account of the great risk and inconvenience of moving (if I may so speak), and the difficulty of not injuring *individuals* particularly by the change. Every case of this kind must be argued according to circumstances. Utility, general utility, which produced governments, or acquiescence in government, must decide on a

fair comparison of inconveniences, between retaining particular forms, and changing them. Compacts between governors and governed, and natural and social rights, are all, in my judgment, foolish as well as ideal creations, and I reject them all, — I follow Hume, Paley, and Paine, against Locke and his followers. Taking utility for the rule, men may judge wrong respecting it; — but what is this, except that men are imperfect? Experience will lead us to correct errors, and would guide us safely and peaceably, even on subjects of government, if we did not fall into such fits of passion as destroy impartial and cool consideration. I doubt not that Dr. Hardy thought all this, as I perceive it is perfectly consonant to his general train of reasoning; but it did not suit him to say it, and he has done what could be done, to present another, and apparently, but not in reality, an opposite view of the subject.

"The leading errors of Paine are, first, his depreciating the blessings we now enjoy; and, secondly, his throwing out of the balance the dangers of change.*

* Writing at the close of 1790, after speaking of the disgraceful Birmingham riots, Dr. Currie expresses himself as follows: — "The spirit of bigotry (as there exemplified) never fails to produce a bigotry of an opposite kind; and a band of political reformers, with Thomas Paine at their head, would propagate a doctrine by which princes, priests, and

"The man was led to these errors, so far as relates to us, by his American habits of thinking; all his other opinions are of the same origin. His notions, with some restrictions, are well suited to that country, but will not apply to a kingdom like this, where the masses of property, especially landed property, are so unequally divided. The ignorance and profligacy of the poor, especially of the English poor, form a still more insurmountable objection.

"An American is apt to under-rate the inconvenience of change, from the practice of the United States. Both the federal government and those of the individual states have been taken down and built up within the last seven years, and certainly with manifest improvement and advantage. Lord Wycombe, who has lately

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nobles would not be reformed, but extirpated—by which the people of England, under their present government essentially free, are classed with the nations on the Continent—with the slaves of Hesse and Hanover, who are bought and sold. In the eyes of these men, the struggles of our ancestors are rated as nothing; the soil of England has been sprinkled in vain with the blood of freemen, and the constitution which has produced, or permitted to be produced (to speak in the language of these gentlemen), such men as Newton and Locke, as Hume and Pitt, as Smith and Fox, is classed with the monarchy of Spain, and the despotism of Turkey — as a fabric, which knowledge cannot reform, and reason must finally overthrow. Is there, then, no medium between extremes so remote?" &c. &c.

made the tour of the American states, and who is a young man of a very fine understanding, told me, that so familiarised are the very cottagers in America with political discussions, from the many occasions on which they have been brought forward, that he found the nature and the obligations of the civil contract universally understood, and men disposed to move in the social order with nearly sufficient exactness, through habit and reflection. The necessity of compulsory laws seemed to be confined to a few general objects. The people appeared happy and contented with a government of their own choice and delegation; and from Boston to St. Augustine he saw not a single symptom of disorder or discontent. All this, however, is entirely inapplicable to a nation like ours, where property is collected into such masses on the one hand, and poverty and ignorance on the other.

"The description of France as it was, and of the great crisis which occurred at the opening of the States General, is extremely good (pp. 22, 23, 24, &c.), and contains some very fine writing. The criticism which follows on the constitution which was formed, is profound. I entirely agree with what is said as to want of *power*, and this every rational man will admit; I agree with him also in what he says as to *influence*, the most

able and the most important part of the whole. It appears to me so very important, that I wish it had been more dilated, and more particularly exemplified. Governments must be administered by men of like passions with ourselves; and if *they* toil, they must be supported by every honourable and every innocent motive of action. They must be in a situation to have their sense of interest gratified, as well as their love of fame.

"But when Dr. Hardy says the constitution of France wanted *principle*, I cannot agree with him. The principles of their Declaration of Rights are, in my opinion, irrefragable, and these are properly the foundation or principle of the constitution. That the constitution was not wisely framed upon these principles, I admit; but the truth is, it never had a fair trial. The instant that a foreign war commenced, and commenced for the purpose of making the king absolute, — the king, in whose very hands the whole of the nation's means of defence were by the constitution placed,— that instant it was easy to see that a people, jealous and irritable in the extreme, would resort to another revolution.

"I observe that Dr. Hardy is not so accurate on this part of his subject as usual. What he calls want of principle in the constitution, as framed by the Constituent Assembly (page 25.),

when he enters particularly into the explanation, he changes (page 36.) into a want of principle in the government of France by *that* assembly. Now the government of France by that assembly was, as we all know, provisional, and not according to the constitution, which was not then formed, but forming only, and which was no sooner completed than they were dissolved. But I believe *that* assembly governed France as near the principles of their Declaration of Rights as could be candidly expected, their difficulties considered, as well from the novelty of their situation, as from the violence of the Abbé Maury and the monarchists on the one hand, and of Robespierre and the republicans on the other. I do not agree with the assertion of Dr. Hardy, that there was no liberty of opinion or discussion under *that* assembly in France. Never was liberty of this kind carried to such extremes: witness the speeches of the Abbé Maury and Cazalès, all of which are in my possession, as well as upwards of twenty newspapers, published during that period, on anti-revolution principles, some of which, and those the most violent, were suppressed only on the 10th of August. I have now by me a number of the "Journal François," published on the morning of that day, describing the commencement of the tumults, which in the afternoon brought the

author to an untimely grave. That and all the preceding numbers are written in the utmost bitterness of party, describing the Duke of Brunswick as invincible, prophesying the downfall of the National Assembly, &c. What Dr. Hardy says of the state of things under the first assembly is completely applicable, indeed, to France now. But the truth is, that, *during a revolution*, there never yet existed such freedom of discussion as under the first assembly of France. I have often heard men of deep observation consider it as a phenomenon. During the American revolution there was nothing of the kind. Committees of safety were then established every where, and arbitrarily kept down what were called Tory sentiments, as the loyal associations keep down "sedition" now. I allow that liberty of speech, as well as of the press, is completely over in France now; and in England itself, the land of freedom, it is greatly impaired. We are rushing headlong into another bloody war, and all discussion of this dreadful measure is borne down by the strong arm of power. The prosecutions that are commenced by government all over England against printers, publishers, &c., would astonish you; and most of these are for offences committed many months ago. The printer of the Manchester Herald has had seven different indictments preferred against him for

paragraphs in his paper, and six *different* indictments for selling or disposing of six different copies of Paine, all previous to the *trial* of Paine. The man was opulent, supposed worth 20,000*l.*; but these different actions will ruin him, as they were intended to do.

"The articles were free, but such as would not have been noticed in former times, except by an —— —, a character nearly as detestable in my eyes as a French Jacobin. It is, however, characters such as these that are now uppermost in all associations, and that are driving things to such extremes. For my part, I foresee troubles, and conceive the nation was never in such a dangerous crisis. A foreign war may produce consequences at which we may all shudder. In Scotland you have no idea of the theological rancour which mingles in all controversies here. * * * * * * * * *

"In these times of party violence, men ought to put the strongest guard over their passions, and to look at both extremes. Dr. Hardy has done this in part, but not, in my humble judgment, with sufficient impartiality. To accuse the principles of the French constitution of all the evils incident to the Revolution is, in my judgment, neither philosophical nor candid. These evils arose in part, at least, from the wretched effect of a vile, pre-established system

of superstition and absolute power on the character of the people, and still more from the enormity of the abuses to be removed. I like not Dr. Hardy's joining in the vulgar and bloody war-whoop of atheism, &c. He knows that the atheism of France (if any such there were), was merely speculative; and the evils of speculative atheism, compared with those of superstition, are not in the proportion of a drop of water to the Frith of Forth. The philosophical Condorcet is, perhaps, a sceptic, but he is the friend of peace and order. Robespierre, on the other hand, is a Jansenist, and a bigot, and has "Providence" constantly in his mouth. I would gladly hope the massacres are exaggerated, though God knows, they have been most horrible. At all events, these massacres are not the effects of the principles of their constitution, but arise from a total departure from every principle.

"In Dr. Hardy's review of republican governments, all the ancient republics which knew nothing of representation, and all the modern ones which are governed by privileged castes, as Venice, &c. should be laid out of the question. Such governments have no resemblance to the late constitution of France. I do not entirely subscribe to what is said of Switzerland and America, though I think there is a great deal of solidity in it. (pp. 52, 53.) The remarks that

follow (pp. 54, 55, 56.) there is no resisting: pp. 57, 58. are very fine. I have some objections to make to page 63.; and the notion that wars are against the interest of the crown and of a popular minister, may be abstractedly true, but is practically unjust. On the subject of war, our own constitution is, I think, demonstratively faulty; and, if I mistake not in my views, its faults in this respect are more likely than any thing else to endanger its overthrow. Wars are entered into without a definition of their object, and without a possibility of judging how far they might have been avoided by negotiation; — wars, which increase the power, patronage, and emoluments of ministers, which gratify their resentments, and which, above all, enlarge the sphere of their ambition, and the theatre on which they act. That appetite for command which adheres to the most powerful minds, and which increases by what it feeds on, is most dangerous in a great minister, such as we have at present, and ought to be most narrowly watched. Who can doubt that Pitt, who wields in one hand the crown, and in the other the democracy of England, would rejoice to extend his power to every corner of the earth?

"I must conclude with saying, that *The Patriot* is a most able pamphlet, and that many of the views in it are original and profound. The de-

fence it makes of our own constitution, as far as this defence goes, is powerful and convincing; and the deduction that we should rally round our constitution, and look for reforms in quieter times, and when the great experiments going on respecting government in neighbouring nations are completed, seems to me irresistible.

"My objections I have stated in detail: a great part of these objections may hold or not, according to the different views which men take of national affairs. I see, for my part, not a single symptom of danger from the spirit of licentiousness. The poor persecuted and abused Presbyterians are universally broken-hearted, and are preparing for emigration to America in vast numbers. A great colony is going out of the best men and manufacturers from this county, and a large detachment from Warwickshire, in the course of the spring, if government do not pass a bill to prevent them, which I understand is in contemplation. Such a step, unless accompanied by a repeal of the Test Act and oppressive statutes respecting religion, may, especially in the event of a war with France, produce some volcanic eruptions that are not foreseen. I see, therefore, no danger from the revolution-spirit at present, which indeed the horrible excesses in France were enough completely to extinguish, but much from the opposite extreme. * * *

— the war in which we are to plunge in favour of old Superstition against young Enthusiasm, — the certainty of decayed trade, increased taxes, and of national discontent, — all these lead me to dread the recoil of the violent fervour of loyalty, and such commotions as the present century has not witnessed. In this country, therefore, I would distribute *The Patriot*, chiefly to give rational views to the prevailing party. But, strange to say, Dr. Hardy would be considered by them as an enemy in a very thin disguise. The wretched effusions of Tatham and Cooper, &c. with 30th of January sermons, red-hot with divine right and royal martyrdom, and bloody Presbyterians, &c. &c. are those only which suit the land *I* live in, and the present hour. I turn from such poor contemptible bigots with pity and disgust.

"On the other hand, I dread the silent indignation of a body of men, powerful and united, and fretted by continual insults, — a small minority, indeed, but formidable by talents, industry, and virtue, — bigots, however, as all sectarians are, and every day becoming less fit for the possession of power. At present they are, indeed, completely in subjection; but who knows what the rapid changes of the times may produce? Enough, and more than enough. Hearing that Captain Miller is to be in town

to-morrow, I thought I should get a frank from him for you, and sat down to give you a few pages after supper. It is now three in the morning, and I have gone on to an unconscionable length. The subject must be my apology. I have actually written a pamphlet; and all my comfort is, that you can read it or not, as you are in the humour. You will see that I have written hastily, inaccurately, and almost unintelligibly.

"Make my kind compliments to Mrs. Young, whom I shall be happy to know. Please also to make my respectful compliments to Dr. Hardy, who is a writer of the very first order, and is, I hope, destined to sustain the honour of Scottish literature, at no distant day. I beg also to be very kindly remembered to Mrs. Hardy, my old (if that phrase may be applied to so young a lady) and much esteemed friend.

"I am, my dear Sir,

"Yours always,

"JAMES CURRIE."

From the foregoing letter it will be seen that the feelings of Dr. Currie were powerfully excited in the progress of the French Revolution. He gazed, indeed, on the mighty drama with an interest too great for his own peace of mind; yet, while he sighed over the atrocious madness which

soon deformed the prospect, he felt confident that the very crimes to which it led, must inevitably, ere long, exhaust the fury of the perpetrators, if not stimulated from without; and he, not unnaturally nor unreasonably, judged that from examples like these England had nothing to fear. He was, therefore, with many virtuous and enlightened men, reluctant to abandon totally those hopes of ultimate benefit to mankind, which the dawn of the Revolution had given rise to. "He could not immediately, it may be presumed, withdraw his partial gaze from a people, who had so lately breathed the sentiments of universal peace and benignity, nor obliterate in his bosom the pictures of hope and happiness, to which these sentiments had given birth." * Meanwhile, the national sympathies of England, wound up to the highest pitch, and carried to an extreme on each side, had divided the country into two distinct and bitter parties. The Revolution and its horrors absorbed every other subject, and poisoned the intercourse of public and private life. In the midst of the wild alarms that prevailed, the government, the throne itself, did not escape the contagion; and it soon became probable that Great Britain would

* Life of Burns, 1st edition, p. 214., where this passage occurs in speaking of the poet; but is probably not less applicable to Dr. Currie himself.

not long remain an inactive spectatress of the continental war.

With whatever doubt the excesses perpetrated in the beginning of the revolution, may have, at times, compelled Dr. Currie to contemplate the consequences of that event upon the condition of society, he never doubted that it was the true policy of England to stand aloof, — to avoid taking any part in the war which had commenced, — and to restrict her interference to a sincere attempt to arrest its progress by prudent and skilful negotiation, and by dignified and energetic remonstrance. While he maintained that this country, above all others, was especially bound to accede to the great principle, that every nation is entitled to fix its own form of government, his knowledge of human nature led him justly to conclude, that external interference would infallibly rouse the national pride of France to repel any attempt at foreign dictation. He could not, besides, avoid fearing that to embark in the crusade against France, in the spirit that seemed to govern the British councils, and with the existing feeling of the nation, would endanger the constitutional liberties of his country. From such a step, too, he anticipated the most ruinous effect on our commerce and manufactures, already beginning to

feel, in an alarming degree, the interruption of the ordinary channels of trade. With these views, it seemed to him that it was clearly the part of England to accept the offers of negotiation made by the new republic; and that, by thus acting, she would not only evince her real desire, but greatly increase her power, to promote a termination of hostilities.

In April, 1793, Dr. Currie was applied to by Mr. Wilberforce, the personal friend and warm supporter of Mr. Pitt, for information as to the trade of Liverpool, and for his opinion on the probable effects of the war upon the trade and manufactures of the country. To this application he replied in two letters, entering largely into the general question, which had so much engrossed his thoughts. This reply produced an invitation to Dr. Currie to proceed to London, in order to discuss the subject there more fully than was practicable in epistolary correspondence. He went to the metropolis in consequence in May, and at one time had reason to believe that his letters, and subsequent interviews with Mr. Wilberforce, had produced a strong effect in an important quarter, as it had been his great wish that they might do. The letters were shown to Mr. Pitt (a circumstance, however, which Dr. Currie had no reason at

the time to suppose); and the Prime Minister, it is understood, for a moment paused, and intimated a desire to see him; but, hurried on by *a commanding influence, which it was impossible to resist,* strongly opposed by a part of the Cabinet, and supported, it must readily be owned, by the majority of the nation, the pause was momentary, and the die was cast. On Dr. Currie's return to Liverpool, he was informed that the offers of negotiation from France had been rejected, and that it was decided to continue the war. Anxious to leave no effort untried to avert what he considered so great a calamity, he thought that something might yet be done by an appeal to the country,—that it was still possible to awake the nation to a sense of the ruinous consequences of such a step. No time was to be lost: if good was to be done, the appeal must be immediate; and, under this impulse, Dr. Currie, in a few days, remodelled the two letters in question into a Letter to Mr. Pitt, which was published in London, in June, 1793, under the name of *Jasper Wilson*, and which produced an extraordinary sensation upon its first appearance, the effect of which is not yet forgotten by those, who remember its coming out. Its reception was, in many respects, much more favourable than the writer had expected. It acquired

a degree of celebrity, indeed, which has distinguished it from all similar productions of that day, and which, however deserved and however honourable, was the source of much uneasiness to the author. Three large editions were sold in London in two months. It was more than once reprinted in the country, by persons unknown either to Dr. Currie or the London bookseller. Several editions were published in Scotland and in Ireland. The work was copied into the periodical publications of America; and, with some omissions that may be easily conceived, translated into the language of Germany, and circulated in that country; and it was also translated into French.

This Letter was warmly admired by the Opposition in parliament, and by all those who disapproved of the war; and its temper and spirit were spoken of with praise by many, who disputed the author's conclusions. It rests on unquestionable authority that, soon after it came out, it was favourably mentioned by Mr. Pitt himself, particularly that part of it, which gives a kind of analysis of revolutions. It was ascribed to various persons; and to Mr. Sheridan, amongst other distinguished leaders of Opposition. By some it was considered the production of more than one hand; but Dr. Currie was the sole

author. Mr. Wilberforce alone was acquainted with his intention of publishing, who certainly was not a convert to his opinions, but respected his motives and promised to keep his secret,—an engagement which, as far as that gentleman was concerned, there is every reason to believe was fulfilled. On this subject, Dr. Currie wrote as follows to his old schoolfellow, Dr. Wells, of London, in the spring of 1794: —

"Of the Letter with the signature of 'Jasper Wilson' I am the sole author. No man advised me, prompted me, or assisted me. No man was privy to my intention but one,—a public character, and a friend of administration,—who, however, did not approve of it. It was written and printed in Liverpool, between the 24th of May and the 6th of June, sheet by sheet, as I had leisure. I never had a fair copy of any part of the MS., and the corrections from the first rough draught were all made on the proof sheets, which were printed with large margins for the purpose. The circumstances were these: —

"The failures last spring alarmed the friends of the Ministry, and, I believe, alarmed Mr. Pitt himself very much. The Brissotine party were at this time suing for peace in private, at the moment that they were keeping up the

mob of Paris by their impudent and ridiculous threats. At this moment the Ministry, it is said, were debating the subject of their continental alliances, which, it is also reported, were strongly urged by a part of the Cabinet (as the war had been), and reluctantly assented to by Mr. Pitt. In this state of things, it was a matter of importance to know how far the war had produced our commercial distresses, and how the pulse of the nation beat to its continuance. Mr. Chalmers, I find, wrote many letters to Liverpool on these points; and I was applied to by the public character alluded to, to give my opinion on the subject. I enquired: it seemed to me apparent that our distresses were occasioned, in a great measure, by the war; and I gave my opinion, with my reasons for it, in a letter of twelve pages. This turned my attention to the subject, and interested me much in the restoration of peace, — a wish which was strengthened by the ruin of several of my connections, and of one particular friend. My letter was dated on the 10th of April.

"I was in London, you remember, in the beginning of May, and at that time had some communications with my correspondent on the subject. Though a friend of administration, he agreed, or seemed to agree, in my sentiments,

and admitted that peace was in our power, in as far, at least, as the ruling faction in France could be considered as competent to make it. He seemed also to say that peace was not improbable. From a different source, I heard much to the same purpose. At this time some idea of publishing my letter, enlarged, by way of promoting a disposition to peace, passed through my mind; but I soon abandoned it.

"After my return to Liverpool, I gave up all thoughts on the subject till the 24th of May, on which day I read the Star of the 22d, where the letters of Le Brun were published, and the rejection of all negotiation on our part was announced. That afternoon I determined on publishing; and shutting myself up in my study, I finished nearly one half of the letter by six next morning, having written through the night. My private letter was the text. I sent for a printer, a very confidential man, who began to print on the 26th, and finished on the 6th of June. The pamphlets went by the coach, and were in London on the 9th and 10th. I mention this haste, to explain to you why some of the expressions are less guarded, than they would have been under more deliberation; and why, also, the composition has perhaps more interest in it, than if written more coolly. I was under

strong impressions of the importance of the subject, but utterly free of party spirit or of factious zeal.

"I have only farther to say, that if you find any thing that looks like unusual information as to political facts, in the Letter, I stated none but on the best authority; — none which are not confirmed by subsequent events, or likely to be so; — none which I would retract if I could. The commercial statements are, perhaps, less correct. In giving my information to the world, I broke no confidence; and I know not that there is an action of my life that I can look to as originating in purer motives. I may have been mistaken; but my error has not originated in any thing selfish or base."

Such were the circumstances under which *Jasper Wilson* was published; and it must be owned, that a strong exertion of moral courage was required, to induce its author to come forward against the weight of government, and in opposition to the general feeling; at a period, too, it should be remembered, which, as far as respects the utterance of opinions hostile to ministers, may not inappropriately be called the *English reign of terror*. It would be difficult, at this time of day, to form an adequate idea of the danger and odium which attended the in-

dividual, who dared to breathe a syllable in favour of peace with France; and it is, therefore, neither extraordinary, nor any reflection upon his character, that Dr. Currie chose to publish under an assumed name.

A pamphlet so remarkable, was the object of various replies; no less than five — none of which were much read; for the rapid succession of the events prophesied by Jasper Wilson confuted his antagonists before they could be reasoned with. Of these answers, the most popular, composed in the manner and spirit of a gentleman, was that of Mr. Vansittart (now Lord Bexley), who, it was stated at the time, was summoned from the country for the purpose of writing it. If superior, as it was considered to be, in the commercial argument, it may be fairly pronounced to fall far behind in the discussion of the general question. At length, in February, 1794, came out an answer by Mr. George Chalmers, chief clerk of the office of Trade and Plantation, of which Lord Hawkesbury (afterwards Earl of Liverpool) was President, in the form of a dedication to a new edition of the author's "Estimate of the comparative Strength of Great Britain;" which was in tone, offensively coarse and vulgar, and in manner, impertinently and unwarrantably familiar.

The Letter of *Jasper Wilson* was, in itself, strictly constitutional and decorous, both in language and in spirit. While it deprecated the war, it breathed what the author sincerely felt — an ardent attachment to his country, and veneration for the British constitution. Here, then, it was invulnerable, however fallacious its reasonings, or misdirected its object, might be thought. But the plan pursued by Mr. Chalmers tended to deprive it of this advantage. Not satisfied with unceremoniously, and without previous notice, addressing his dedication to Dr. Currie by name, as the author of *Jasper Wilson*, he affected a personal intimacy with him, and an acquaintance with his sentiments, which had never in the slightest degree existed. He then proceeded to insinuate, on the strength of this acquaintance, in language that could not be mistaken, that the opinions expressed in the Letter of *Jasper Wilson* were the very reverse of the real sentiments of Dr. Currie. So far, however, from any intimacy existing,— so far from Mr. Chalmers having ever been on such terms with him as to possess an intimate knowledge, or, indeed, any knowledge at all, of his opinions, — the fact is, that Dr. Currie was never in company with Mr. Chalmers but twice in his life — each time in a large party; and the last, at his (Dr. Currie's) own table;

nor was there ever a single letter exchanged between them. The tendency of this ungenerous artifice in a political opponent was evidently to draw down upon Dr. Currie the open displeasure of government; and also to strike a blow at the root of his subsistence, by holding him up to public reprehension, in the town where he resided, as a hypocrite and an enemy to his country. That the intention of Mr. Chalmers was to do this, the writer does not mean to affirm, as it is not for one human being to scrutinise the heart of another. It is sufficient to add, that the consequences which might have ensued to Dr. Currie in his profession did not follow. The good sense and good feeling of the community in which he lived, the public confidence in his abilities, and his unimpeachable private character, prevented such a result.*

* About a month after the publication of Mr. Chalmers' *Dedication*, Dr. Currie wrote the following letter, which it will be seen is marked by all that feeling, which such an attack was calculated to excite: —

To the Rev. George Duncan, Lochrutton.

" Liverpool, March 19. 1794.

" My dear Uncle,

" Third attempts ought to be successful — and that this may be true in your case, I sit down to write to you while your letter is fresh.

" It is a very painful thing for me to be thought Mr. Jasper Wilson, and I would do any thing but tell a lie to

It was Dr. Currie's intention to publish a fourth

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convince the world of my ignorance of him and his letter. I certainly have never acknowledged him, and as certainly never will. Yet, I believe I shall have his sins to answer for. The reputation of this work has procured, not to Mr. Jasper Wilson, but to your nephew, many false and foul imputations. You ministerialists and war-mongers are a most irritable set, and cannot bear to be reasoned with. Though you are so strong in numbers, you have all the peevishness of conscious weakness, and when you cannot confute, you calumniate and misrepresent. Pardon me for beginning with a *you*, what you are certainly innocent of.

" Mr. Jasper Wilson has had the honour of being answered four or five times, and at last *Dr. Currie* is publicly addressed, by a clerk in Lord Hawkesbury's office, as ' the reputed author of Jasper Wilson's Letter,' in a strain of unparalleled insolence, falsehood, and malignity. Mr. Vansittart, whose pamphlet you have read, is the most gentlemanlike, and the most able of his answerers, though he does not superabound in these qualities.

" It is seldom that calumnies injure an honest man, unless he makes a grand stir about them. I do not open my lips either about Mr. Wilson or his antagonists, and I beg the same favour of my friends.

" The statement of Vansittart respecting the treaty of Pilnitz is a poor sophistry. There were two treaties, — one secret, one divulged. The secret treaty he denies, or rather gives reasons for disbelieving; but you will see in the debates of the present session that it is now admitted on all sides.

" Respecting the finances of our allies, time has decided. We have subsidized the King of Sardinia, and four of the inferior German potentates. We have also just engaged to pay 700,000*l.* to the King of Prussia. The Empress of Russia will let us have *men;* but we must pay, clothe, trans-

edition* of *Jasper Wilson*, in 1795, in his own name, and to take that opportunity of noticing the conduct of Mr. Chalmers; and he had actually printed the preface, in which he made some reflections on the errors and prejudices of

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port, and feed them. She has not paid the interest of her debts for the last two years. Facts such as these decide the question; but who dare mention them?

"When we meet, you shall have the secret history of Mr. J. W. In the mean time you will perceive that I have not acknowledged my identity with him, and act accordingly, if you hear him mentioned. (*a*) * * * * I am rather in low spirits — but this between ourselves.

"Remember me very kindly to all with you. I am, in haste, my dear uncle,

"Yours very affectionately,
"JAMES CURRIE."

* The Marquis of Lansdown, upon learning this, wrote to him as follows: — "I am sorry that you have preferred a new edition, with preface, &c. to a second Letter, as I am sure the latter would have more effect. I would not take upon me to speak so positively, if I had not had occasion to remark the comparative effect of Dr. Price's publications; though there was a reason for it which is not in yours, as his consisted principally of calculations, which required to be carried on. A republication of the first might follow the second, with such corrections as you thought proper; and together, I am confident they would make a standard book. In the mean time I am inclined to think that warmth (kept properly under) does better for these times than correctness; but I suppose you are too much advanced to change your plan."

(*a*) The passage omitted refers entirely to private affairs.

statesmen. But the renewed suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, extraordinary restrictions on the press, and the increasing irritability of the public mind, induced him, reluctantly, to relinquish a design, which might have brought ruin upon himself, unalleviated by the consolation of his having attained the object, for which alone he wrote. Shortly after the appearance, too, of Mr. Chalmers' "*Dedication*," he received a number of anonymous threatening letters, and various reports were prevalent of his having been committed to the Tower, &c. — all which he considered, and probably with reason, to have proceeded from a design to prevent any second publication from his pen. The Letter of *Jasper Wilson* is now reprinted with the preface alluded to. In the beginning of this preface the history of the pamphlet is given, much in the way already seen in the letter to Dr. Wells; but various observations are afterwards made, to which the attention of the reader is requested, on account of, what is thought by the present Editor, their great and permanent importance to the best interests of his country. This new edition is also enriched by a few comments of the distinguished statesman named in the last page, who, in 1783, concluded the peace with America — the Marquis of Lansdown (then Earl of Shelburne), and who,

in sending them to Dr. Currie, thus expresses himself, in a letter dated December 4th, 1794:—"I feel myself much embarrassed to find out any remarks worth troubling you with; but, to remove any suspicion of reserve, I send short memorandums of what struck me on reading it over a second time, which I have just now done. In fact, there is all to praise, nothing to blame, and hardly any thing to criticise."

It only remains to say a few words on the character and style of the Letter of *Jasper Wilson.* The single object which it had in view was to prevent the war with France. It was not the production of a party, nor composed from any party motive, for it has been seen that it was written and published unknown to any member of Opposition. It is distinguished by originality of thought and force of expression. The views which it unfolds, are philosophical and profound. Its political predictions were speedily and remarkably verified; — scarcely a year, indeed, elapsed, before many of them had been accomplished. Its commercial reasoning time has, in some respects, shown to be mistaken, although the general principles on which it rests are sound. The author, it must be confessed, has not sufficiently allowed for the elastic power of the commercial principle,—that facility, with which trade

and manufactures accommodate themselves to a change of circumstances. In the course of a destructive and expensive war, new and important channels of trade were undoubtedly explored; — an event, the possibility of which Dr. Currie, in the haste of composition, has either forgotten to advert to, or appears to have overlooked. But who shall say what the situation of England at this day might have been, as a great people and a commercial nation, if she had been unshackled by the effects of the Bank Restriction Act, and by her enormous debt, — the first of which was necessary to the continuance, and the last the certain consequence, of the war? *

* To follow this train of thought is foreign from the present purpose. But the Editor is strongly reminded by it of a passage in *Jasper Wilson*, and tempted to ask whether the period is not in effect arrived, such as it anticipates. Are we not now, under the heavy pressure of immoderate taxation, suffering the consequences of that lavish abuse of the funding system, and that profligate expenditure of the national resources, which commenced in 1793? Yet, if the effect of the long and memorable contest with France upon our finances, shall have been to create and encourage in the rulers and people of Great Britain *a disinclination to war*, (the existence and increasing strength of which feeling it is grateful to notice and record), — then, indeed, has that bloody epoch passed over, not without leaving behind an inestimable benefit, — a benefit, which might tend to reconcile us to present suffering, and which must, eventually, have the effect of lightening our distress.

The style of *Jasper Wilson* is at first vigorous and argumentative; and at length rises into eloquence, which, without irritating, warms, and, coming from the heart, finds its way thither. The

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The passage from Jasper Wilson alluded to is striking, and may at least afford room for serious reflection, not only on the part of those who vote the supplies, and of those who govern our finances, *but of the country at large.* — It is as follows: —

"It is true, this spendthrift expenditure must bring a day of reckoning. But what then? Those who administer the public revenue, are not owners of the estate, but, in general, tenants at will, or, at most, have a life interest in it only. The practice of mortgaging the public revenue during wars, prevents the people from feeling the immediate pressure of the expense, by transferring it in a great measure to posterity. Ministers look to the present moment, and delight in expedients that may delay the evil day. When it comes, it does not, in all probability, fall on those with whom the mischief originated. They are no longer in power; they are perhaps in their graves, and removed from the complaints and wrongs of their injured country." — *Jasper Wilson*, 3d edit. p. 7.

The opinion of that acute observer and profound reasoner, Mr. Hume, upon the funding system, deserves attention: — "In the third place, we are such true combatants, that, when once engaged, we lose all concern for ourselves and our posterity, and consider only how we may best annoy the enemy. To mortgage our revenues at so deep a rate in wars, where we were only accessories, was surely the most fatal delusion that a nation, which had any pretension to politics and prudence, has ever yet been guilty of. That remedy of funding, — if it be a remedy, and

candid reader will discern the pen of an author impressed with a deep and solemn persuasion of the importance of his subject, and uttering his powerful appeal in the fervid language which belongs to sincerity and truth. If his views should at this time seem gloomy, or his warnings appear disastrous, the time and the occasion were equally so. Unprecedented alarm and general distress prevailed throughout the land. Not to have been affected deeply at such a crisis, would have been an attribute of mind as rare as it is little to be desired.

No stronger proof can be given of the effect produced upon Dr. Currie's feelings by the political state of England at this period, than that, with a high professional reputation and an extending practice, possessed of valuable friends and connections, and generally respected and esteemed, he should have entertained, even for a moment, the idea of quitting his country. But in July, 1793, he wrote to his kinsman in Virginia, intimating that such a step was possible on his part, and making enquiries, the answers to

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not a poison, ought in all reason to be reserved to the last extremity; and no evil but the greatest and most urgent should ever induce us to embrace so dangerous an expedient." — *Hume's Essay on the Balance of Power.* — EDITOR.

which might influence his decision. The idea seems, indeed, to have been transient, as no further traces of such an intention are to be found in his papers or correspondence, subsequent to this period; and on the 24th of May, 1795, he wrote to the same friend as follows: — "I shall stick to this country, whose government I venerate and respect, however much I have disapproved and deprecated the measures of its present administration."

In looking back to this period, the present generation of Englishmen has abundant reason to rejoice. The progress of education and the diffusion of knowledge, together with the universal publicity now given to every subject of general or local interest, — these causes and their natural effects — a prevailing spirit of enquiry and great increase of information, — have so sharpened the national intellect, as to render the recurrence of such fearful times in this country improbable, if not impossible.

With the publication of *Jasper Wilson* commenced and ended Dr. Currie's political writings.* From this time he endeavoured, as much as possible, to withdraw his attention

* With the exception of three letters in the London *Public Advertiser*, under the signature of *Caius*, written while he was in London in 1780, on the subject of Lord

from calamities which he had foreseen, by which his feelings were deeply affected, but which it was out of his power to avert or to alleviate.

The following passages occur in a letter to Miss Kennedy, dated 4th Dec. 1795, and may serve to illustrate what precedes : —

" You kindly wish for some account of myself. I am in as good health as a being of my frame of mind, and of my anxious profession, can be in times like these. I believe I am fatter than you ever saw me ; but my hair is thinning with time, what remains is growing grey, and my forehead begins to wrinkle. One way or other I am too incessantly engaged. Thought and care press too much upon me. I have too little vacuity of mind — yet I have occasionally fits of gaiety, and have not lost my relish of the pleasures of social life. My nerves, however, are far too high-toned : they vibrate too easily, and the vibration is too often jarring. All this you will easily understand." * * * *

" You will readily suppose that such an attack as Chalmers' could not be altogether without effect in Liverpool ; professionally speaking, how-

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George Gordon's No Popery riots in that year, and which he some years afterwards accidentally met with in a collection of fugitive pieces, called " The Remembrancer."

ever, the effects have been less than might be supposed. Neither has it affected my associations much. The chief effect has been on my own outraged feelings, which, however, are pretty much at peace on the subject."

Dr. Currie now began to carry into execution his intention of publishing the result of his professional experience in fever and febrile diseases; and had made considerable progress in doing so, when an event occurred, which, for a time, diverted his thoughts into a new channel, by which his literary reputation was some years afterwards widely extended. This was the death of the celebrated poet, Robert Burns, which took place in July, 1796,—a subject which will be noticed particularly in the subsequent pages. At present, it will be only necessary to state that Dr. Currie undertook to write the Life of that remarkable man, so soon as his medical work should be finished and given to the world.

With this additional motive for hastening its publication, he proceeded to its completion; and in the following year (1797) appeared his "Medical Reports on the Effects of Water, cold and warm, as a Remedy in Fever and other Diseases, whether applied to the Surface of the Body or used internally." They were dedicated to Sir Joseph Banks, the President of the Royal Society.

The success and the sale of this work were probably equal to those of any medical publication of the present or past times. To this several causes contributed; — the previous reputation of the author; the novelty of the practice recommended; the modesty and caution with which it was announced; and the almost entire absence of those technical expressions, by which medical works are generally rendered unintelligible to all but members of the profession. Dr. Currie has succeeded in an extraordinary manner, in clothing professional details in a distinctness of phraseology and elegance of style, combined with a degree of feeling, which give to the *Medical Reports* an interest, far beyond what might be looked for in a publication of that nature. The simplicity and candour too with which the unfavourable results of the practice are given, tend strongly to gain the confidence of the reader; and altogether it may be doubted whether any improvement in medical science was ever presented to the world in a more attractive garb.

This work is also peculiarly valuable as abounding in facts, ascertained by the severe test of repeated experiments, many of them the result of trials in the author's own person, and submitted to calm and patient investigation; while

the reasoning and arguments from these facts are the fruit of accurate observation and philosophic induction. An anxiety to become master of the facts connected with every subject that came under his attention was, indeed, a leading feature of his mind. He never rested satisfied to draw conclusions from secondary information, where it was in his power, by direct application, to verify what was stated. We frequently meet in the *Medical Reports* with reflections of a personal kind, which seem to bring the reader into immediate contact with the author, and which prove him to have been not less distinguished by his tenderness of disposition and sympathy with the sick, than bv his originality and boldness as a physician. That he had a theory on the origin and nature of fever, is to be expected from so profound an observer of the phenomena of animal life: but it is unnecessary to enter into an examination of it, since medical science has not yet been able to determine which of the various theories on this subject the preference should be assigned to, and because Dr. Currie himself considered his speculations as of little importance, compared with the facts from which he reasoned. These are in no degree affected by any theory to which they may give rise. In his general view of the doctrines respecting fever, he re-

marks, with reference to his own opinions, that "if they should be found as little satisfactory in their result as the conclusions of others, the learned and candid reader will not, it is hoped, suffer his opinion of the accuracy of the author's facts to be affected by the fallacy of his reasonings, but extend his forgiveness to one other abortive attempt to illustrate the nature of fever, — an important, but difficult and long-contested subject." —(*Med. Rep.* vol. i. p. 236.)

It is equally unnecessary in this narrative to go at length into an analysis of the *Medical Reports;* but a brief account of the peculiar practice which that work treats of may be given without impropriety. The practice, then, recommended by Dr. Currie in fever, was the dashing or pouring cold water over the body in the early stage of the disease, where the pulse was frequent and the heat preternaturally great; and the use of tepid water in those feverish affections, where the debility was too great and the attack of too long standing, and where the morbid actions were too weakly associated, to authorise the use of cold. Under similar restrictions, he also permitted his patients to drink freely of cold water in fever. By the judicious application of this refrigerating treatment in different forms, according to circumstances, the

disease was generally arrested in its onset, or mitigated in its progress, and finally subdued.

So bold a practice, a remedy so contrary to the received opinions and prejudices of mankind, was naturally calculated to startle those to whom it was proposed, and to be received at first with doubt, or encountered by opposition. It was, therefore, peculiarly incumbent on the author to be accurate and explicit in the rules laid down for the mode of employing this unusual remedy. They are as follows; and we find them repeated so constantly in every form throughout the work, as not only to show his conviction of the paramount necessity of strict attention to them, but also to render it nearly impossible to mistake them.

The affusion of cold water may be safely used "*when there is no sense of chilliness present, when the heat of the surface is steadily above what is natural, and when there is no general or profuse sensible perspiration.* These particulars," adds Dr. Currie, "are of the utmost importance." (*Med. Rep.* vol. i. p. 18.) For the illustration of the practice and its modifications, and the cases where it is less efficacious, and even prejudicial, the reader is referred to the work itself, which will repay the perusal.

To the *discovery* of the remedy of the cold

affusion, Dr. Currie laid no claim. So early as the year 1768, it appears to have been introduced in the West Indies by Dr. Wm. Wright* of Edinburgh, whose account of his practice was made public for the first time in the *London Medical Journal* for 1786; and in 1791, a general statement of its advantages, by the late Dr. Brandreth of Liverpool (the friend and colleague of Dr. Currie), had been inserted by Dr. Duncan of Edinburgh in the *Medical Commentaries* of that year.† The use of cold water in ardent fevers, internally, or by immersion, was also common among the ancients; but affusion on the surface of the body, as a remedy in fever, seems to have been wholly unknown to them.‡ To Dr. Wright, with whose narrative the *Medical Reports* commenced, must be ascribed the honour of having introduced the cold affusion into notice in modern times.§ But we undoubt-

* For an interesting account of this eminent physician and botanist, see a Memoir published in Edinburgh in 1828, by Blackwood, which contains a selection from his correspondence with Dr. Currie.

† See Medical Reports, Dedication.

‡ Ibid. vol. i. p. 77.

§ Between this venerable physician and Dr. Currie an epistolary intercourse was kept up after their first meeting at Liverpool in 1798; and their friendship, which no jealous feeling once disturbed, was constant and sincere. The claim to honour which each might advance, is marked in the

edly owe to Dr. Currie *the first specific directions for its safe application** ; to the knowledge of

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following extract from a letter of Dr. Wright's to Dr. Currie, dated 25th Feb. 1799: — " After revising and adding to the paper on Fever, I gave it to Dr. Simmons, who published it in the London Medical Journal, pt. 2d. 1786. No notice was taken of this paper for several years, till Professor Gregory tried the cold sponging in fevers with great success at Edinburgh.

" This novel practice was talked of amongst the students, but adopted by very few of the physicians here, or I believe any where in the kingdom, till you and some of your friends adopted it in the fullest extent. What I left in doubt in the first and subsequent papers, you have fully illustrated; and laid down unerring rules for the application of cold water to the surface, and pouring cold water into the stomach, which, if duly attended to, will continue to have the happiest effects.

" By analogy you have cured scarlatina, and succeeded in many other desperate disorders, which were amongst the *opprobria medicorum*."

On the 21st of April in the same year, Dr. Wright wrote also to him as follows: — " I am glad to see the success of cold ablution of late in various parts of America. If practitioners would only attend to what you have printed in Italics (*a*), no mistake could happen either in extinguishing all fevers, or in the speedily removing tetanus or other spasmodic diseases."

* Extract from " The Study of Medicine," vol. ii. p. 251. by John Mason Good, M. D. London, 1825. — " In our own day, Dr. Wright of Jamaica is, perhaps, the first physician who revived the practice; but it is chiefly to the judgment and experience, the writings and recommendation,

(*a*) The directions just quoted, p. 217.

which he was led, from having been very early impressed with the importance of a regular investigation of the effects of temperature, and its changes, upon animal life; and from his having, in consequence, paid particular attention to the phenomena of morbid heat in fever. In order to attain accuracy in this interesting branch of pathology, the thermometer was used by him in marking the heat of the body, with a precision and care not previously attended to, nor thought necessary, by professional men. Under his direction, and according to a form which he gave, as well as after the one invented by the celebrated John Hunter, small mercurial thermometers of great sensibility, with a moveable scale, were constructed by Ramsden*, capable of the easiest application, which became known by Dr. Currie's name. He was the first medical writer who insisted on the necessity of thermometrical observations in febrile and other diseases, as an indispensable guide in their treatment and history.†

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of Dr. Currie of Liverpool, that cold water as an external application is indebted for the high and deserved degree of popularity it again possesses, and especially in typhus."

* Med. Rep. vol. i. pp. 35. 224.

† The following passage is strongly expressive of his opinion on this point: — "In the use of all these remedies, and particularly of opium and wine, the *strictest attention*

The successful practice exhibited in the *Medical Reports* was quickly followed in the West Indies and in other warm climates. In Great Britain and Ireland also it was gradually adopted, to a considerable extent, if not generally. In London it was, indeed, received for the most part with indifference or disapprobation; and there is ground for believing that in private practice in that city, the cold affusion seldom or never had a fair trial by those physicians, whose authority and sanction would have insured its adoption. But in the hospitals of the metropolis, where tried, it appears to have been attended with the usual happy effects.*

If the slow progress of this practice in London was a subject of regret to him, the feelings of Dr. Currie were, on the other hand, gratified by ample testimonials in its favour from other quarters; and especially by the extraordinary success with which it was attended in the navy. It was fast gaining ground also in the army; and so salutary was it found to be in both these important services — so highly was its value

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was paid to the heat of the patients, without which he who undertakes the treatment of fever, seems to me to *walk in darkness.*" — Med. Rep. vol. ii. p. 26.

* See Med. Rep. vol. ii. pp. 83. 112., where Dr. Dimsdale's experience at the London House of Recovery, and Dr. John Reid's at the Finsbury Dispensary, are quoted.

estimated by those military practitioners by whom it had been tried — that the fourth edition of the *Medical Reports*, prepared a few weeks only before the author's death, was, by permission, dedicated to H. R. H. the Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief of the Army. The work had been translated into French and German, and had made a very favourable impression on the Continent; so that at the period when Dr. Currie died, he had every reason to anticipate that time alone was required, in order to secure the universal adoption of his practice.

Since that time, however, it seems that the cold affusion has been less employed in private than Dr. Currie was justified in expecting — either succeeded by new modes of combating fever, or owing to its having been occasionally attended by unfavourable results, from injudicious application, or from culpable inattention to his rules. Simple, too, as this practice is in itself, it requires a degree of personal attention and patient discrimination on the part of the medical attendant, which practitioners unfortunately are not always willing, and perhaps not always, from being called in too late, able, to bestow. It has likewise been asserted by those who should be enabled to speak with authority, that the nature of fever in this country is ma-

terially changed in the last twenty years; and that typhus does not now so often as formerly show itself under that form which will justify the cold affusion. On this point the writer does not presume to offer an opinion.

The application of water, cold and warm, was successfully extended by Dr. Currie to scarlet fever, measles, eruptive small-pox, and many complaints incidental to children; and in all these, as well as in typhus, if the cold affusion be now less practised in private than formerly, the use of tepid water, either by sponging or by pouring over the body, is become an established practice.

Dr. Currie had ascertained, also, that the shock of the cold affusion was frequently a most powerful remedy in tetanus and other spasmodic and convulsive disorders; and such it continues to be found. It may be stated, likewise, that his authority and example have revived the practice, now become general, of permitting, and indeed directing, cold water to be drunk freely in the hot stage of fever, whenever the feelings of the patient call for it. This practice was known to the ancients, as has been observed; and at the beginning of the last century was in great reputation in Spain and Italy. In our own country, too, it had been recommended by

Hancock and others; but at the time when the *Medical Reports* appeared, in 1797, the use of cold drink in fever was contrary to modern practice; and where it was occasionally given, was administered with caution, and rather permitted than enjoined.* The practice then prevalent, which was recommended by the powerful name of Dr. Clark of Newcastle, was, to give wine in large quantities; while cold water was in general strictly prohibited.

Before quitting this subject, to which the want of a medical education prevents the writer from doing justice, one circumstance must be mentioned in which Dr. Currie took the deepest interest.

In September, 1804, the fortress of Gibraltar was visited by the malignant epidemic fever, to which the south coast of Spain is periodically subject. Dr. Currie was naturally anxious to know whether his favourite remedy had been tried, and entered into correspondence on the subject with the proper official authorities. The result of his enquiry is given in the following passage from the *Medical Reports*, which was written only a few weeks before his death; and which derives additional importance from the late recurrence of this destructive pestilence in

* See Medical Reports, vol. i. p. 90.

that fortress (1829). It will convey some idea of the style of the work; and will, it is thought, confirm what has been said as to its characteristic excellence: and the concluding observations, on laying down his pen at the close of his labours, while they illustrate the general tone and spirit of the author, will, with many, possess a peculiar and melancholy interest, from being the last which he ever wrote.

"The reader will naturally expect to hear some account of the effects of the cold bath, or cold affusion, in the epidemic of Gibraltar, as a remedy and a prophylactic. Considering that this epidemic held its fatal career for four months and upwards, and that all the usual modes of treatment failed, it might naturally have been expected that those in attendance on the sick and dying would, in these desperate circumstances, have had recourse to a mode of practice which, in similar situations, had been attended with uncommon success. The first volume of the *Medical Reports* had been for seven years before the public, and had passed through three editions in our own language. The second volume had also appeared, and had met general attention. The work had been favourably received on the Continent, and began to influence the military and naval practice of foreign

nations. Of this a remarkable proof had appeared in the second volume, in the narrative of the physician, Dr. B. A. Gomez, who, in the summer of 1802, when a fatal fever prevailed on board the Portuguese fleet, had recourse to the cold affusion, after every other remedy had failed, with a success altogether extraordinary. This was the more striking, as the fever, so far as we can judge, seems to have been the same that committed so much devastation in various parts of the Spanish peninsula, and that at length intruded into Gibraltar itself: the more striking also, as the fever in the Portuguese fleet occurred in the straits of Gibraltar, in sight of the garrison; and the extraordinary success of Dr. Gomez, even had it not been published to the world, might have transpired to the practitioners on shore. It is a duty, however, that I owe to the public, to declare that the fatality of the fever at Gibraltar brings no imputation on the mode of treatment recommended in these volumes; for, after the most diligent enquiry, I cannot find that the cold bath in any form was used either as a prophylactic or a remedy in any single case of the disease. Neither can I find that tepid ablution or affusion was in any case resorted to, or that water was recommended as a drink. I record these facts with feelings very different

from those of wounded vanity; if they bear hard on the feelings of any other person, I regret the circumstance. But this is a case in which my sense of duty obliges me to speak out. I will, however, make no comment, but leave the subject to the reader's reflections!

"On a review of the fatal epidemic at Gibraltar, there are other circumstances to excite our deep regret. Of this kind is the neglect of the usual means employed to prevent the introduction of fever into that garrison, when the ports of Spain were affected by contagious fever. Of this kind, also, was the rash declaration, when the fever did appear in the garrison, that it had not originated in contagion, and was not in its nature contagious: two propositions distinct in themselves, but which have been presumed, without proof, to involve each other. However general the contrary opinion may be, the fever of Gibraltar, so far as we know, might have its origin in some noxious quality of the general atmosphere, or in marsh miasmata, and yet be propagated in the second instance by infection. It is greatly, therefore, to be lamented that measures were not taken immediately to separate the sick from the healthy. These ought, indeed, to be resorted to in every instance of the appearance of general fever, espe-

cially as, according to the present state of the evidence, they are equally easy and effectual. There is no safety in considering a fever to be non-contagious in the first instance, and waiting for evidence to the contrary. There is neither wisdom nor mercy in declaring it to be non-contagious while the point is in doubt, with the view of preventing general alarm. To have adopted the measures of precaution requisite in the case of an infectious epidemic, unnecessarily, is a light evil. In a military garrison, where subordination and discipline are already established, it is no evil at all. At the worst, some trouble may have been incurred which might have been spared. How melancholy the reverse of this supposition! What shall the theorist say for having trusted for safety to his speculations, where the lives of thousands were at stake? — what reparation can he make for his errors, when the proofs that convict him are the graves of his countrymen? To pronounce a disease to be contagious, ought not to deprive the sufferer of the aids of science or of humanity, as some weakly suppose. It ought now to be generally known, that simple means of precaution, *adopted early, and strictly adhered to,* do away the danger to the attendants; and the practitioner of medicine that cannot trust his

own safety to these, is unworthy of his office, and ought to lay it down. And let it never be forgotten, that the means of prevention to the uninfected are means of cure to the sick. To keep off the idle and unnecessary intrusion of those in health, is to secure to the sick silence and quiet: to enforce universal cleanliness and ventilation, is to increase their comfort and support their strength: while the regular and prudent use of personal ablution, which, of all the means of precaution, is perhaps the most important to the healthy, is, of all the means of cure, certainly the most efficacious to the diseased." †

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"There seems no doubt of this method of cure (the cold and tepid affusion) extending here and every where. My task then, I hope, is finished; and with a few words more, strictly of a personal nature, I shall lay down my pen.

"Having had an apparently hazardous, but, in my judgment, a highly salutary medical practice to recommend to the world, — a practice contradictory to long-established and almost universal prejudices, — I reflected beforehand, with the utmost seriousness, on the duty imposed upon me, to avoid, in my manner of presenting

† Med. Rep. vol. ii. p. 282.

it, all possible grounds of offence. If my matter was alarming — if my object was bold — I have endeavoured to make my manner calm and temperate. The claims of my contemporaries to merit on this occasion, so far as I was acquainted with them, I have studiously brought forward. I have been desirous of treating them, not merely with justice, but generosity; and many series of experiments which I myself have undertaken, and, I may say, undergone, especially in investigating the effects of perspiration on animal heat, I have suppressed in the detail, and only given in the result. In a word, it has been my endeavour to suppress all personal considerations, and all petulant expressions; where I could employ the authority of others, to do it freely and respectfully; and where I have been led by my subject to controvert opinions before the world, to use the language of civility and candour.

"By these means I have endeavoured to disarm personal opposition, and to avoid controversy — controversy, which some philosophers have invoked, but, I think, unwisely; and which, on a science so imperfect, so important, and so difficult as that of medicine, seems to me to have almost uniformly involved consequences of an injurious and melancholy nature.

"On the whole, my endeavours have been successful. I have encountered little opposition; I know not that I have provoked any man's enmity; while the medical writings of the day, both in Britain and in America, bear evidence that considerable changes have been effected, and are effecting, on the opinions and conduct of medical men, quietly and insensibly, on points of no mean importance, in physiology as well as practice.* J. C.

"Bath, July 6. 1805."

Out of an extensive correspondence, which followed the publication of the *Medical Reports*, it would have been easy to select many honourable testimonials of approbation from distinguished members of the profession; but the Editor will content himself with giving the subjoined letter, in reply to one from an original genius and eminent physician, which did not express the favourable opinion generally entertained of the work. It will illustrate Dr. Currie's admirable temper in discussion, and his independence in maintaining his own views, even against so celebrated an authority as Dr. Darwin.

* Med. Rep. vol. ii. p. 284.

"*To Dr. Darwin, Lichfield.*

"Liverpool, December 25. 1797.

"My dear Sir,

"If I had not a very particular apology to offer for my silence, I should be unpardonable in delaying so long to answer your letter of the 10th. The truth is, ever since I received it I have been making arrangements for passing ten or twelve days in London, where I have particular business; and it was my full intention to spend a day at Derby on my way. I will not express to you the satisfaction which I promised myself from a personal interview with the author of *Zoonomia*, of whose genius and talents I think as highly as of any man's of the present age. It occurred to me, that in conversation I could discuss the points on which we differ, better than in writing; and I had not a doubt of finding in Dr. Darwin the candour which, if not the criterion, is at least the very general attendant, of superior minds. I am disappointed in my intentions by circumstances you can easily imagine, though I still expect to make good my purpose in the course of the winter or spring. In the mean time your letter must no longer be passed over in silence. Accept, then, my best thanks for your observations on my book, and for the

open sincerity with which your censures are bestowed. The disapprobation of a man of your character and talents is not, indeed, a light matter; but I perceive, in the manner of your expressing it, a confidence in my temper that is not misplaced, and a respect for my general talents that, I fear, is less merited.

"I am sorry you think I am the slave of authority, and not sufficiently attentive to facts and to common sense. Now this I will venture to ask you; — Are you really of opinion that my volume has not a fair proportion of information, however faulty it may be in its reasonings? I should think, — but I am not a proper judge, — that it is not a mere cento of the observations of others; but that, defective as it is, it contains a more than ordinary quantity (taking medical works as we find them) of original observation, and of facts which, when confirmed, as I have no doubt they will soon be, will be found of no common importance. I trust, also, that where I have differed from others, as I have had occasion to do, I have differed with candour, and, where it was due, with respect. If my book has any merit, it is in the facts that it contains — all of a practical nature; in the perspicuity with which they are detailed; and in the temper with which it is written. As to my language and my rea-

sonings, all I can say is, that I am little wedded to either; and I am even sorry that I reasoned at all, because I have my fears that the imperfection of my theory, where I have theorised, or the prejudice with which others may survey it, may turn attention from my facts, or bring them into disrepute. I was determined, when I began to write, not to theorise at all; but I fell a victim to the general infirmity. I consider, however, what I have done in that way as of so little importance, because of so little certainty, that, in a future edition of the volume (and I just learn that another will be immediately required), I shall be ready to modify, or even to abandon it. I believe as little in 'tone,' in the literal meaning, as you do; but it is an expression generally used, and little liable to misinterpretation. In my next edition, however, it will be every where omitted, and 'living energy' put in its place. But I know not what to substitute for 're-action,' which also conveys a distinct idea, unless I should adopt the theory which presumes to explain the cause of this re-action. Now this, as I have already said, I am not prepared to do. But when I talk of cold as a stimulus, you are shocked at the imbecility of the human mind; and you seem to conceive that there is an absurdity, or, indeed, an absolute contradiction, in

the terms. You ask me — Can darkness stimulate the eye?

"I reply — that it is a *certain mode* of applying cold, and this only, that I consider as a stimulant; that I use the word stimulus in the usual sense, as that which incites to action, which every powerful impression on the sensation necessarily does.

"Can darkness stimulate the eye? No; darkness occasions no sensation — neither pleasure nor pain. Can cold water, dashed over the naked body, be considered as a stimulus? In my sense of the term, certainly; since nothing impresses the sensations more. I cannot conceive how we can differ on this; and it is impossible we can, unless we differ in the sense in which the term stimulus is used. Yet I have looked at your definition of the word, and I receive it. (Vol. i. p. 13.) As the sweat is poured out on the surface, the heat of the body subsides. This I assert as a fact, ascertained by the thermometer. I have supposed this may arise from the absorption of heat in the formation of the perspirable matter, though I have not laid much stress on this point. You object to this, because all chemical combinations emit heat, — a doctrine which is not without exceptions, since solutions are, in my sense of that

term, combinations. But it is not necessary to discuss the point, because the living secretions I do not consider as chemical processes, nor governed by chemical principles. As a matter of fact, I do not find that, in the secretions of the body, heat is generally emitted. My use of the word 'perspiration,' in page 176., is perhaps not correct; evaporation should be the word, I believe.

"Though morbid heat be a consequence of morbid action, why should I not speak of expelling it? However such a heat is produced, it cannot be without consequence in its turn. Is it possible to restore the actions to the state of health with the heat at a hundred and four? and to what purpose is the cool and cold treatment in fever, but to reduce the heat? Though heat may be the effect of morbid action in the first instance, is there any absurdity in supposing it, when accumulated, to operate in continuing the action? The increased discharge by the surface I consider as the means, not as the effect, of the heat's reduction; and if so, my reasonings have nothing of absurdity, whatever be their foundation in fact. But, on the other hand, I perceive that where the heat of the system is suddenly increased beyond a certain point, sensible perspiration does not take place with faci-

lity; and that it is promoted by diminishing the heat by external applications, or by cold drink, as I have fully explained.

"There are various facts to be established between us. You deny the existence of a spasm on the extreme vessels. I am happy that you are going to enlarge on this point; and I have no doubt you will treat it, as you have not treated it hitherto, as a question of fact. As to the doctrine of a supernatural power inducing this spasm, a *vis medicatrix*, I have no belief in it more than you have.

"Whether the excitability or spirit of animation have quantity or form, is not the precise question between us. I do not think its operations can be explained by an application of the laws of quantity to it: it does not, I think, accumulate and diminish in the inverse ratio of the stimuli acting on it. But this is a point of immense consequence. I refer you to some observations in the *English Review* *, and at a future time I will, if you please, explain myself more at large.

"You accuse me of detailing the despicable nonsense of Cullen and Hoffmann, instead of reasoning from the present knowledge that phi-

* For 1794 and 1795, written by Dr. Currie: of whose having done so Dr. Darwin was not, however, at this time aware.

losophers possess of nature. You will, I hope, pity rather than renounce me, if this be my case. Surely I do not knowingly adopt the nonsense of others, or advance nonsense of my own; and I look anxiously for light in the twilight that surrounds me. Cullen I knew, and I loved him. He had a superior mind; and his whole life was a struggle with domestic distress, and a contention with the powers of his own imagination. The brutal attacks that were made on his character and fame, towards the close of his days, I was often indignant in observing; and, after a long life of incessant toil, I saw him, with deep emotion, descend in poverty and sorrow to the grave! You, who are deeply read in the human mind, may judge whether these circumstances afford any explanation of what you may consider as an undue prejudice, in favour of his doctrines.

"For my own part, I mistake my character (a thing very likely), if I am formed by nature to bend under any authority in forming my judgment; and I give a proof of this when I resist the author of *Zoonomia*, whose learning and experience equal, and whose genius, in my judgment, far surpasses, those of Hoffman or of Cullen.

"May I hope, in a future edition, that you will

notice my principal facts, and reconcile them to your doctrines. If this should be done soon, it may be of much consequence to me; since, if my conviction follows, it may serve to withdraw me from future errors, in reasoning on what I have still to propose to the world. In Edinburgh, I hear, they abuse me as being a pupil of Dr. Darwin!

"Accept my sincere wishes for your most valuable life and health; and believe that no one thinks of you with more respect and regard than

(Signed) "JAMES CURRIE."

To this letter Dr. Darwin replied on the 3d of January, 1798; observing that he was induced to do so, as his last had not disobliged Dr. Currie, and assuring him that he had no regard for his own opinions more than for those of other people, and that Truth was his only goddess. He still disapproved of cold being termed a stimulus, and of the use of the word "re-action:" nor could he concur in the idea which Dr. Currie entertained, that heat was repelled to the heart by the spasm of the capillaries, and sent back by the re-action of that organ. He also still rejected the term "sedative" applied to opium; and the theory which considered the diminution of heat in fever as the *cause* of perspiration becoming sensible, not the *consequence* of that

cooling process. The whole tone of the letter, however, was milder than the first, and it concluded as follows: —

"I am in doubt whether I should trouble you with this letter or not; but I think your facts so valuable, that I am grieved to observe that you did not give yourself the trouble to exert the voluntary power which you possess, in reasoning about them, and hope you will again exert yourself in detaching the sources of error in medicine as well as in politics.

"If any thing should bring you to this part of the country, your company would give me the greatest pleasure; and I flatter myself I could show you a few, who cultivate reason both in physic and in politics, whose conversation would amuse you, and who are, as well as myself, great admirers of Jasper Wilson. Adieu, from,

"Dear Doctor,

"Your sincere friend,

"E. Darwin."

Dr. Currie now commenced the task of writing the life and editing the works of Burns, which, it has been already stated, he had undertaken to do.

So long ago as the year 1787, he had received a copy of the poems of Robert Burns

from Dr. Moore, the well-known author of Zeluco; and in a letter to Lieutenant, now Vice-Admiral Sir Graham Moore, son of Dr. Moore, dated 11th June of that year, he expresses the following opinion: —

"The poems of Burns have certainly great merit. An original poet, which he may be called, is most highly welcome to every man of taste and feeling, after the disgust which arises from listening to a long succession of copyers of copyers, who have inherited from each other the same thoughts, the same expressions, and even the same cadence. This West-country poet (the first, I believe, which that psalm-singing region has produced,) has that admirable simplicity which is the attribute of true genius. His thoughts are natural, and flow easily; and by turns he is humorous, pathetic, and sublime. His Address to the Mouse has all these characters of writing united; and it is certainly one of the happiest productions of modern poetry; and, what gives it additional value in this case, none but a ploughman could have written it.

"I agree with you that Burns ought to keep clear of politics, and we may add religion, which, from its very nature, cannot be made the vehicle of good poetry; as Johnson has demonstrated in his Life of Waller, in a passage of

amazing force and elegance, to which I beg your attention."

To the same friend he wrote as follows, on the 12th of August:—

"The more I read Burns, the better I like him; and it is with much pleasure that I hear he is about to settle in the neighbourhood of Dumfries, where a farm, on very advantageous terms, has been offered him by Mr. Miller, brother to the Lord Justice Clerk. On the banks of the Nith or the Annan he will meet the Muses of former days; and these rivers may rise in his song to a rivalship with the Yarrow or the Tweed."

These extracts show the interest which Dr. Currie took in Burns, afterwards evinced by a more lasting memorial. The death of the poet was an event which he heard with deep concern; and, finding that he had left his family destitute, his active sympathy, in conjunction with that of his constant friend Mr. Roscoe, was quickly enlisted with success in promoting and collecting a subscription for their immediate relief. This led him into a correspondence with an old college friend, Mr. John Syme of Dumfries, the intimate and daily companion of Burns, and a man who knew him in his latter years better, perhaps, than any other individual. In the

course of this correspondence, it was stated to be the anxious wish of the friends of the family to have his letters and MSS. collected, and put into the hands of some man of letters, to be published by subscription and preceded by a biographical account. By this plan it was thought that the national feeling might be most effectually excited in favour of his infant family, and a sum of money be obtained, which would prove a fund towards their future support. Seeing the strong interest taken by Dr. Currie on this occasion, Mr. Syme proposed, after several applications in Edinburgh and other quarters had failed, that he should become the biographer and editor; and with some reluctance and hesitation, arising from reasons which his own letters, introduced hereafter, will best explain, he at length consented; on the stipulation that this consent should not interfere with the medical work in which he was then engaged, and which it was his wish to finish before embarking in any new undertaking.

The difficulties which presented themselves in his path will be disclosed in these letters, and were of a nature from which a man in the enjoyment of uninterrupted leisure and perfect health might have reasonably shrunk. How much more must they have been felt by one

whose time was necessarily devoted to his profession, on whose attention there were many important claims, and whose mental energies were too frequently impaired by languor and debility, the usual consequence of illness! Often, indeed, in the progress of his work, he was compelled to pause; and on one occasion (18th Jan. 1798), when writing to Mr. Syme, he says, "I am so weak with loss of blood, that I cannot write without extreme languor. I have had, and still have, a most severe cold, and have been obliged to submit to venesection again and again. Who knows but I may pay a visit to Burns instead of writing his life, and thus furnish an incident and a subject of reflection for some other, with which to eke out his biography?"

"*To John Syme, Esq., Ryedale, Dumfries.*

"Liverpool, July 26th, 1796.

"My dear Syme,

"Though I have not returned my thanks for your kind and satisfactory letter, yet I have felt as I ought to do, the readiness, the speed, and the ability with which you have complied with my request. In receiving a favour from you, I feel neither anxiety nor hesitation; for the sense of

obligation is lost in the sentiments of regard and friendship.

"Your arguments would have been conclusive with me as to the sale of my landed property, were it not for considerations of a public nature that are strongly impressed on my mind, and seem to me to bear on the subject. The distresses of our Government in pecuniary matters are coming fast upon them. The resources of the ordinary emissions of bank paper are dried up, for the Bank can extend their circulation no farther; and I apprehend some likelihood of a paper coinage on the part of our Government, not payable in specie on demand, similar to those which have been issued in their distresses by America and France. In this case, money will rapidly sink in value, and fixed property appear to rise; and that uncertainty and insecurity take place in the circulating medium, which will render all bargains for future payments variable, delusive, and perhaps ruinous. My notion is, that something of the kind alluded to is likely to be done on the meeting of parliament; and therefore I will pause till I see a little further into this matter.* It is difficult

* In February, 1797, six months after the date of this letter, the bank restriction act was passed, which prohibited the Bank of England from paying specie on demand, and authorised the issue of 1*l.* and 2*l.* notes, which has since

to conjecture the precise expedient to which the ministry will have recourse, but *extraordinary* measures *must* be had recourse to.

* * * * * * *

"I have long thought of inviting you to Liverpool. Independent of the curiosity you may be supposed to feel in seeing a place of its size and commerce, the very great and extending connection which it maintains with the south of Scotland, might furnish you with powerful motives for such a journey; and I think I could make you acquainted with some persons here whose society would repay the fatigues of your travelling. Let me press this upon you. I would advise you to take the present season; to give yourself plenty of time; and to come on horseback. Be assured of the kindest reception it is in my power to give. It would doubtless have given me, and several of my friends, particular pleasure to have seen poor Burns with you, but that expectation is now over. I have just heard that he has taken a journey to that country 'from whose bourne no traveller returns.'

"My friend Roscoe paid him an elegant compliment lately in his "Life of Lorenzo de'

been pushed at times to an alarming extent, but is now, it is to be hoped, by the firmness of ministers, for ever put an end to. A striking commentary on the above passage.—*Editor.*

Medici," and sent, or meant to send, him a copy of his work. Burns often talked, as we were informed, of coming to Liverpool; and he would have found many admirers here. I assure you, I lament over his early fate. I never saw this original genius but for a few minutes, in 1792, in the streets of Dumfries. In the little conversation I had with him, which was begun rather abruptly on my part, I could easily distinguish that bold, powerful, and ardent mind, which, in different circumstances, such as the present state of the world renders familiar to the imagination, might have influenced the history of nations. What did Burns die of? What family has he left? and in what circumstances? Am I right in supposing him not a mere poet, but a man of general talents? By what I have heard, he was not very correct in his conduct; and a report goes about that he died of the effects of habitual drinking. Be so good as to tell me what you think on this point.

"Men of genius like Burns are sure to be envied, and even hated, by cold-blooded mediocrity and selfish prudence; and, on that account, one receives reports to their disadvantage with great distrust. As you knew this singular man, of whom much will now be said, and much enquired in future times, I wish you would give me as much

of his character, and of his private life, as you can without inconvenience, in addition to the points I have enquired into; and I will endeavour, in one way or other, to turn it to some account.

"In hopes of hearing from you soon, and, perhaps, of seeing you, I am, my dear Syme,

"Your faithful friend and servant,

"JAMES CURRIE."

To the same.

"Liverpool, July 30th, 1796.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I thank you very sincerely for your obliging letter of the 27th, in which you communicate some account of the death and funeral of Robert Burns. By a letter which was on the road to you at the time that yours was written, you will see the interest I take in the subject, and how very sensibly I shall be gratified by any opportunity that may offer of testifying my respect for this departed genius.

"Though the paper you had the goodness to send me did not arrive, I procured the sight of another, and I read with much interest the accounts which it contains of the character and funeral honours of this extraordinary man.

"I hope you will, at your leisure, comply

with my request, and give me such answers as are in your power to the queries I have put; for it is possible that I may have it in my power to convert the information you give me to some purpose.

"I observe an advertisement in the *Dumfries Journal* for a meeting of the friends of Mr. Burns on the 28th. Oblige me with an account of the object, and the issue, of that meeting.

"I have little fear that a provision will be procured for the family of a man, whose genius reflects honour on his age and country, and who will be talked of with admiration, after the far greater part of his contemporaries, high and low, are lost in oblivion.

"I am, my dear Sir, in haste,

"Yours ever,

"JAMES CURRIE."

To the same.

"Liverpool, August 12th, 1796.

"MY DEAR SYME,

"I have been in daily expectation of hearing from you for this fortnight past, in answer to two letters I have written to you on the subject of poor Burns.

"My first, requesting information in regard to his life and character, you might, indeed, find it

troublesome to answer; but I *did* expect a word or two in answer to my enquiries in regard to the mode adopted for the support of his family.

"For want of this information, I have been altogether at a loss how to proceed in my solicitations here; for your letter, written in haste, left me in doubt whether I ought to ask for money, or for subscriptions to the posthumous works.

"I have regretted this the more, as I have a long letter from an excellent woman, and a great friend of Burns, urging me to make some exertions, and supposing me perfectly acquainted with the mode in which you are proceeding.

"Despairing of hearing from you, I last night wrote a preamble to a subscription paper, which I have put into the hands of a lady, who will exert herself in getting *subscriptions of money;* and I have begun to solicit my particular friends, and not without success. At the same time, every one is desirous of knowing to what extent it is necessary to subscribe; and several have suggested the propriety of each subscriber having a copy of such works as may be published. For my own part, I am ready to exert myself in any way that may be requisite; though, I confess, I am less able to solicit for money than for any thing else. And the admirers of this celebrated

genius may serve his family in different ways; — for instance, it may be an object to provide for the sons; and, at a proper season, I am ready to do my best in that way. Some money, however, you shall have; but do write to me what you are doing, and what you expect to be done, that I may give my friends some notion of the sum they should advance, as well as judge for myself on that point.

"Roscoe and I are also very anxious to hear who are to be the editors of his posthumous works, and who is to be Burns' biographer. It is a national concern that this be done with care and skill, and I earnestly entreat you to consider well of this point. All his remains should be carefully collected, but not all published; and his life should be written by one who feels the charms of his genius, and who can express what he feels. By this time such points are probably settled. I should be happy to hear that you are Burns' biographer yourself; and if you undertake it, you may command our assistance, if we can assist you.

"There are certain parts, I apprehend, of Burns' life, as well as of his opinions, that must be touched with delicacy; but the picture that is exhibited of him should convey a genuine likeness; and this can only be done by one, who

can conceive his character, and the high-wrought sensibility which laid the foundation of his excellencies, and perhaps of his defects.

"In expectation of an answer, short or long, by return of post — in great haste,

"I am, my dear Syme,

"Your faithful friend,

"JAMES CURRIE.

"The lady who wrote to me is Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop."

To the same.

Liverpool, 15th August, 1796.

"MY DEAR SYME,

"I have given you more trouble than I intended about Burns; but I will send you forty or fifty guineas in a few days for his family — and this, I hope, will be a successful apology.

"I agree with you in thinking the subject of his life delicate as well as important in its nature, and I hope it will be handled with skill and address. I should, however, be very sorry if there were not a superior hand employed to that you mention; for though I have seen some productions of that person, which convey a favourable notion of her taste and fancy, yet I can never suppose her equal to a conception of the character of this great and masculine genius.

"The biographer of Burns has not many events

to relate—the history of his life may be confined to a very few pages; and in regard to his character, that, in my mind, is displayed in almost every poem he wrote, to such as have the comprehension necessary to receive it. The very circumstance of Burns having pourtrayed himself in such vivid colours, is a decisive proof of his superior genius. It is not often that the real character of an author appears in his works. Inferior minds shrink from a full exposure of themselves; and in the exhibition of their characters are instinctively led to veil their defects, and to make more conspicuous their excellencies. It is only for men of the first order of genius to present themselves without covering or disguise, in all the nakedness of truth and all the energy of nature! This fact may be easily explained. Common minds covet, of all things, the approbation of the world; superior minds prefer to this, the approbation of their own hearts. It is very rare that these last are completely gratified. Independent of the very defects that are too often entwined with kindred excellencies, it is not common virtues that satisfy their wishes, or common acquirements that will gratify their aspirations. Sinking far below the standard of excellence which their imagination is so constantly exhibiting, and too often mortified by those lapses into

which sensibility is so liable to fall, they cannot conceal their errors from the tribunal of their own hearts; and why should they seek to disguise them from the tribunal of the world? Of the world, whose comparative ignorance they know, whose injustice they so often feel, and whose kindness is seldom bestowed, till they are no longer sensible of its value!

"But, if I proceed in this strain, I shall trespass all reasonable bounds.

"What I wish chiefly to know is, whether any *authorised* person has undertaken the prefatory biography and editorship of Burns, and whether any bookseller has been applied to in regard to purchasing or publishing what posthumous things may appear: because these points are highly important to his family and the public; and (as I said before) such time as I can spare, and such talents as I possess, may be commanded in this service. I have some connections with the London booksellers, and I am positive I can command a much larger sum from them than can be had in Edinburgh.

"That an authorised biographer should be fixed soon, seems to me the more necessary, because it is to be feared that volunteers may appear, attracted by the popularity of a subject, which they may deform and disgrace.

"But I have not the least wish to step out of my way on this occasion, if this business is already settled, and in proper hands; and therefore I communicate my offer to you only, and in confidence. Indeed, if I were to be employed, I should wish it to be unknown.

"In haste, I am, my dear Syme,

"Yours most truly,

"JAMES CURRIE."

To the same.

"Liverpool, August 25th, 1796.

"MY DEAR SYME,

"If I had any mercy in my nature, I ought now to spare you on the subject of Burns; but you will see that my craving appetite is not yet completely satisfied, though the object of my writing at present is rather to convey thanks for what you have done, than to make fresh solicitations. Why will you make me apologies, and tell me of interruptions? Your letters are excellent: they are, in the very highest degree, interesting: they are, in one word, equal to the subject on which they are written. Accept my warm acknowledgments for all your trouble; and let your benevolence be gratified by the high pleasure it has conveyed.

"When I had the presumption to offer myself as the biographer of Burns, I acted under an impulse that dies away within me; and I was under the mistake that this task was to be undertaken by the lady to whom we have alluded. It seemed to me that, setting aside the disadvantage of little personal acquaintance, I was fitter for the task than a lively female, who, though she might feel the brilliancy, might not be able to sustain the force or support the weight, of his character.

"In proposing to write the life of Burns, I was not aware that Dugald Stewart was likely to undertake that office; — certainly a man as well qualified as any in the island, and to whose superior genius I bow. I trust that nothing will prevent his engaging in the business; and if my solicitations with him can be of any use, I am ready to employ them. The life and personal character will not require to be drawn at great length; and the inimitable letter you sent me of Burns' own will supply a great part of the materials. The critique on his writings is a more difficult task; and it will afford scope to great talents. One principal subject of curiosity to Englishmen, — and Englishmen will be very curious as to Burns, — is the nature of his education, and the degree of his information. Some

happy strokes of national character and national manners might be displayed in satisfying this curiosity; and being acquainted with the manners of both countries, the *peculiarities* of the life of a Scottish peasant are better known to a man in my situation, than, perhaps, to natives who have never lived in England.

"I, however, altogether renounce the task of his biography, though, if I have leisure, I shall, possibly, amuse myself with some criticisms on his writings, which you shall see.

"Cadell and Strahan were both here a few days ago: they breakfasted with Roscoe, and I am sorry the occasion was slipped of speaking to them as to Burns' poems.

"My view in offering to write Burns' biography, &c. was, first, to serve the family, if I could; and, secondly, to rescue it from hands still more unequal. Fame and profit were out of the question; and, indeed, I should have desired to remain unknown.

"In such an undertaking, my business would have been to act under the direction of the executors, and to have submitted every thing to them before it was printed, or rather, indeed, to you.

"My chief difficulty would have been to find time requisite for a task so important and cri-

tical; and I rejoice that it is in so much better hands. The criticisms that such an undertaking would have brought upon me, would not have weighed with me much. I have already sustained, and I hope surmounted, the attacks of bigotry and malice; and I despise, or at least I do not dread, the renewal of these attacks.

"However, the life of Burns should be written, for the sake of his family, with all due regard to the prejudices of the world; and so written, I see little that his biographer has to fear.

"I will speak to you seriously and conscientiously; for at this distance, and situated as we are, it would be abominable to deal in compliments. No man is so fit to be Burns' biographer as yourself; and I earnestly recommend you to undertake the task, if Mr. Stewart declines it. If you do, I will put my remarks and criticisms entirely into your hands; and Roscoe will give you his also. If this do not meet your approbation, which, however, it ought to do, you may command us in any way you think for the good of the family: other wish or interest we have none.

"Yours most faithfully,

"JAMES CURRIE."

To the same.

September, 1796.

"My dear Syme,

"I really know not what to say to your letter of the 31st, and this has prevented me answering it as early as you might expect. I hope you have not mentioned my rash proposal, and that my supposed willingness has had no share in Mr. Stewart's declining the task you allude to. I have told you my anxiety and uneasiness on the occasion, and will now explain myself fully.

"My objections (which you will justly say ought to have been considered first) arise from various considerations. You talk of your engagements. I can hardly suppose they are equal to mine: every day of my life I am, at least, four hours on horseback, and two on foot; and this bodily exertion is attended with incessant exertion of mind. My only leisure is from two to four, after my forenoon calls are over, and an hour or two in the evening. But at such times I am generally much fatigued, and when I attempt to write after my morning calls, as at present, I am obliged to stimulate my jaded nerves by large quantities of coffee. The little leisure I have, finds me almost constantly dis-

posed to sleep, and without coffee I am ready to yawn and tumble back on my sofa.

"There are various demands on this leisure, imperfect as it is. My family, my medical consultations, and my daily correspondence must be attended to. But I have had, for some time, a medical publication on hand, which has lingered most unaccountably, owing to my thoughts wandering into politics, and into various other collateral points that need not be mentioned. Now I find there is a danger of my being anticipated in this publication, and perhaps robbed of some honest reputation, if I delay it much longer. I have, therefore, begun seriously to arrange my papers within these few days, and have spoken to a printer; and I can hardly expect, if Burns' life, &c. is called for immediately, to get forward with both publications at once. You see, then, how I stand; and if either Mr. Stewart, Mr. M'Kenzie, or any other competent hand has been looked to, and can be obtained for this office, *I would certainly wish to decline it.* Here is the simple truth. You will not suspect me of any pitiful affectation. But if no such can be procured; if you will not undertake the work yourself as a principal, allowing me to be your aide-de-camp; and if you, and whoever else act for the family, really think I can serve it, by doing my best as a biographer

and critic on the Scottish bard, I will not draw back from any expectation I have excited.

"Before, however, even on these suppositions, I undertake the business, I wish to mention two or three particulars, that we may see how far our notions of the manner in which it ought to be executed coincide. My idea is, that the life and critique alluded to ought to be prefixed to his posthumous publications, and that the whole should be on the plan of Johnson's Lives of the Poets; viz. a narrative of the life, and then an appreciation of the writings. For the narrative, the MS. you sent me will furnish a principal part of the materials, and it may be inserted altogether, omitting, however, a few particulars that might give pain to living characters; or it may be quoted occasionally, as authority for the particulars mentioned, so as to embrace the whole. And such additional information may be collected in Ayrshire, and from yourself, as may illustrate the narrative in the earlier parts, and lengthen it out to his death. In all this there will be no great difficulty; but some delicacy will be required in touching his faults and irregularities. In regard to the critique, that will not only apply to the poems already published, but to the letters, &c. now to be brought into light; and thus the biographer

must have these before him. Of the poems already published, a sort of arrangement may be pursued, as they are humorous, tender, or sublime; and they will afford room for some striking observations. Of what are yet unseen no notion can be formed. On this part of the business my friend Mr. Roscoe will, I hope, do something; the remarks of a man of his talents and taste, himself an excellent poet, will be interesting; and the more, as he never saw Burns or his country.

"It strikes me, however, that there will be some difficulty in transmitting the papers that are to be printed to Liverpool for perusal; and this circumstance, among many others, points out the impropriety of my being employed on the business.

"You must give me a notion what is to be printed, and where; and you must tell me who act on this occasion besides yourself, for this poor family.

"Here we have an excellent printer, but you would not think of printing his works in Liverpool? I suppose that will be done in Dumfries or Edinburgh.

"I imagine it will be thought prudent to avoid all political allusions in the life.

"If it extend nearly to the same length as

that of Milton in Johnson, I should suppose that will be what is expected.

"I put all these questions, the better to compare our ideas; and I will thank you to notice them in order, with your first leisure, that a final decision may be made.

"On the whole, I think you will agree in my opinion, that the task will be more conveniently and better executed in Edinburgh, where, I hope, some men of letters will be found to discharge this duty to departed genius and to his country. The decision, after what I have said, shall be with you and Mrs. Burns, or whoever act for her. If you really and truly, under all these objections, wish for my undertaking the task we talk of, I will not, as I said before, withhold my assistance, or my best exertions; but, in the mean time, I do not wish to have my name mentioned in the business.

"I hear with pleasure that the salary enjoyed by Mr. Burns is settled on his widow. This I have from Colonel Dunlop, of the Ayrshire Fencible Cavalry: it has made me relax in soliciting subscriptions. Mr. Roscoe has written a beautiful monody on Burns, which I will send you soon.

"I wish you would tell me whether you are always as busy as you say; and whether we may

not hope to see you here this autumn. If you could come soon, we might settle many things with advantage in a personal conference.

"I am going to talk over the whole of this business with Roscoe. He has promised to accompany me into Scotland when I next go down; and you will be pleased with his manners, as well as with his conversation.

"I am, in haste, my dear Syme,

"Yours always,

"JAMES CURRIE."

To the same.

"Liverpool, September 16. 1796.

"MY DEAR SYME,

"This is the last letter I shall write to you at present on the subject of Burns; for we now understand each other perfectly.

"As the biography and criticism will not be wanted for some time, I can have no hesitation in undertaking it, provided a better hand does not seem likely to be procured, and that, under all the circumstances of the case, Cunningham, &c. wish it. The truth is, I could not well have executed it, if it had been wanted immediately; unless, indeed, it had been important to the fatherless children, for whom I would certainly be willing to make some sacrifices. As it will

not be required for ten or twelve months, I can accomplish it, as I said before, if it be wished.

" I am glad that our friend Cunningham is to have the papers in his charge : I know his excellent heart. He will, of course, be very cautious whom he trusts with a sight of the naked effusions of poor Burns; for there are many that would, from mere curiosity, wish to inspect them; and several who, I fear, would be glad of an opportunity of finding in them food for their malevolence.

" If I am to be the biographer, it will not be necessary to send me every thing he has written; but it would be proper to convey to me a complete specimen, at least, of his letter-writing, &c., that I may see his style and character, as far as his correspondence displays it.

" As to his character as a poet (the principal point), that must be chiefly collected from his printed poems. The materials of his private character are very ample in your letters, and the incidents of his life may be easily collected, as far as they are necessary to be detailed. His brother Gilbert's account of his infancy will be very interesting.

" If it should be fixed that I undertake this business, I will get a MS. book, in which I will begin, at my leisure, to collect incidents and digest my thoughts; but I will not begin the

composition till the time approaches that it may be required.

"Besides my friend Roscoe's monody, I have got another by Rushton of this town,—a truly original genius. He lost his sight on the coast of Africa, whither he sailed several voyages. He is truly a poet, as you will one day see.

"It would amaze you to witness the enthusiasm felt about Burns among many English people here. They understand him easily in all the English counties from Lancashire north; and he every where takes that strong hold on the heart, which is the criterion of original genius.

"I will send you these monodies, with the life of Burns, when I get a private opportunity: they are both in the stanza of the Mountain Daisy, and of some length.

"When you write to Cunningham, pray make my best remembrances to him. I hope he will be on his guard against the scoffers.

"You may communicate such of my letters to him as you think fit, but in confidence; for it would give me great pain to get into the public mouth on this occasion.

"I shall transmit you our subscriptions in a few days.

"In haste, I am always

"Yours affectionately,

"JAMES CURRIE."

To the same.

"Liverpool, October 4. 1796.

"My dear Syme,

"I enclose you a bill of this date for seventy guineas, for the use of the family of poor Burns. The subscriptions amount to 74*l.* 10*s.*, of which I have as yet received about 50*l.* only. The rest, however, are good, and will come in when I can meet the subscribers. Twenty shillings, at least, will be required for advertisements. It is possible that I may receive a few guineas more, which shall in due season be transmitted.

"A report, however, prevails that the King has given a pension of 50*l.* a year to the widow, which I hope is well founded; for it has, I am sure, been thirty guineas out of her pocket in the present instance, not only by preventing voluntary subscriptions coming forward, but by stopping my solicitations, as I before mentioned to you.

"Since you did not contradict the report, I conclude that it is well founded; if it be not, I think I could raise our subscription to a hundred guineas.

"I formerly mentioned to you that I had received two monodies on Burns — one by Roscoe, and another by Rushton. They have

both great merit, especially the first. But they have a common fault, — that of attacking the ingratitude of Burns' countrymen too violently. I objected to this in my friend Roscoe; but I have not been able to prevail on him to alter his poem in this or in several other particulars; partly, because there is no reasoning down the indignation of a poet on a subject of this kind, and partly, because what poetry he writes, which is very little, he executes at a single exertion, and cannot be got to retouch.

"The foundation of my objection is this; — that the kind of attack to which I allude, may set the adversaries on their defence; and, in conducting this defence, I fear the frailties of Burns might be unnecessarily exposed. I will, however, copy this poem for you.

"By this opportunity I also send you the curious account of Burns by himself, of which I have taken a copy, which shall not be exposed. If any thing new occurs on the subject, please to mention it.

"In haste, I am, my dear Syme,

"Yours always,

"James Currie.

"Tell me what you think of Roscoe's poem. He is going to send you the copy of Lorenzo de' Medici which he designed for poor Burns."

To the same.

"Liverpool, December 31. 1796.

"In regard to Burns' remains, they may certainly be printed as well here as any where, if they can be printed as conveniently. But to tell you the truth, I suspect that many of his effusions, and some probably the best of them, have such strong parts in them of different kinds, that I am not willing, even with Roscoe's assistance, to take the responsibility of editing them. All that I can say is this: if no better can be done, you may, if you approve of it, send such of the MSS. here as you have arranged, and as you think may be printed. Roscoe and I will look them over with attention, and look out for a printer, &c. We will also look out for a London bookseller.

After I have perused these MSS. I shall be prepared for the biography, which I will sketch out of such materials as you may furnish me with. When every thing is so far prepared, you shall come up for a fortnight and revise the whole, and then you, Roscoe, and myself will sit in a final council on the remains of this immortal genius before they are put to the press. A pleasing, though melancholy occupation!

"It appears to me that every thing that is

now printed should be as free of exceptions as may be; but that a future volume may contain such things as are now too vehement, but which yet may stand the test of time. However, on this and other points, we shall judge better when we see the MSS.

"If you approve of this plan, you must take the trouble of collecting letters, &c., and of answering such queries as I may put to you as to his Dumfries-shire life. As to his life in Ayrshire, that is chiefly found in his letter to Dr. Moore, and I can apply there for what is deficient.

"Here then our correspondence on this point may rest for the present. I have got ten or twelve guineas more. My situation (as a physician) makes it an object with me not to be talked of on this occasion.

"Your visit to us will fall about May or June.

"In great haste,

"Yours ever,

"JAMES CURRIE."

To the same.

"Liverpool, February 8. 1797.

"My dear Syme,

"Your letter of the 6th January reached me on the 12th, and along with it came the remains of poor Burns. I viewed the huge and shapeless mass with astonishment! Instead of finding, as I expected, a selection of his papers, with such annotations as might clear up any obscurities,—of papers perused and approved by his friends as fit for publication, or furnishing the materials of publication, — I received the complete sweepings of his drawers and of his desk (as it appeared to me), even to the copy-book on which his little boy had been practising his writing. No one had given these papers a perusal, or even an inspection: the sheep were not separated from the goats; and,—what has, perhaps, not happened before since the beginning of the world, — the manuscripts of a man of genius, unarranged by himself, and unexamined by his family or friends, were sent, with all their sins on their head, to meet the eye of an entire stranger!

"Finding what an extraordinary charge was devolved upon me, I shut myself up in my study for the greater part of several nights; and on the 22d ult. I had finished the perusal of these sin-

gular papers. I read them with sympathy, with sorrow, with pity, and with admiration; and at times, with strong though transient disgust. Sealing up a few by themselves, that in my judgment ought to be committed to the flames, I sent the rest to my friend Mr. Roscoe, as you desired, who has perused them also. He returned them to me the day before yesterday, previous to his setting out for London. I had desired him to mark such as he thought might be published, or as afforded the materials of publication, and to give me his sentiments on the best method of disposing of the whole for the family.

" The following is a copy of his answer: —

" ' My dear Friend,

" ' I have read the papers with infinite amusement, though with infinite regret. Inclosed is what occurred to me as to the publication. I have not attempted to make any selection, as there is scarcely any thing of his own which on the plan suggested may not be useful. On my return I yet hope for another opportunity of looking into them, and shall always be happy to render any service in my power. I wish to return them when you are in the way to receive them; and, if you will please to mention any hour to-day or to-morrow when you are to be at

home, I will take care they shall be punctually with you.

" ' I am, most truly, yours,

" ' W. R.

(*Inclosed in the above.*)

" ' Suggestions as to the disposing of the papers of the late much lamented Robert Burns.

" ' 1. That whatever is done as to returning any letters, papers, &c., should be considered as the act of the widow, and transacted in her name.

" ' 2. That the letters from Mr. Burns' stated correspondents should be selected, and each person's enclosed in a cover, till it be known whether they wish them to be returned: and in case they should, may it not be reasonable to require Mr. Burns' letters in return, as being a necessary part of the materials for the intended publication?

" ' 3. That an arrangement should be made of such of his letters and unpublished poems as are proper for publication; but that nothing which he has written in his moments of levity or eccentricity, and which may be supposed to affect his character in a moral view, be allowed to see the light.

" ' 4. That a narrative should be written of his life, introducing occasionally his own detached

memoirs, letters, observations, poems, &c., as illustrating the progress of his mind, the state of his opinions, moral, political, and religious, &c.; adding from time to time such observations as may naturally arise from the documents, so as to render the whole honourable to the character of Burns, and interesting and useful to the world at large.

" 'It is greatly to be wished (if not an indispensable requisite), that the narrative should be written by some person who has lived in habits of intimacy with the poet, and who may often be enabled to illustrate his sentiments and observations by his own personal knowledge of him; but, at all events, it is necessary that he should feel a thorough disregard of vulgar prejudices, and should avow the work.

" 'I apprehend the whole would form a tolerable octavo, or two volumes in twelves, which might be published by subscription, at a guinea. The memoirs might occupy about one half.

THE
POSTHUMOUS WORKS
OF
ROBERT BURNS.

To which are prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings: collected principally from his own Letters and Manuscripts; and published for the Benefit of his Widow and Children. By A —— B ——.'

"So far my friend Roscoe; and with his sentiments my own entirely correspond. As you have not perused the MSS., I will give you a general notion of what they consist. You have read the different books probably: they consist chiefly of letters and poems copied out fair, the original draughts of which are to be found among the loose papers; and the best of the poems are already in print. But there are a few detached memoranda set down at various times, containing incidental opinions and reflections, which are nowhere else to be found.

"1. There are nearly fifty sketches of letters, written on various occasions; a few of which, and only a few, may be published entire. The larger part of many are fit for the public; and some will admit of a few passages only being selected. It was seldom that the bard put pen to paper that something sterling did not flow from him. As might be expected, where detached correspondents were written to without any view to the letters being brought together, there are certain phrases frequently repeated. These chiefly respect independence of spirit in a humble condition; a sentiment which obtruded on his mind as often as he wrote to persons in a higher condition, and which, as he expressed it often, he acquired the habit at last of expressing

nearly in the same phraseology. It will be necessary to omit many such passages. Other passages it will be necessary to omit, because they respect living characters and recent circumstances, which it would be improper to expose to the public; and, in respect to such omissions, it is altogether impossible that I can form a proper judgment. I suspect also that there are passages to be omitted, which respect occasions in which the bard engaged with all the vehemence of his character, and possibly took the wrong side, or carried the right to an extreme. In regard to Dr. M'Gill's controversy, for instance, a stranger must be entirely at a loss what to set down or what to suppress: and the same may be said on other occasions, on which his ardent sympathies were excited. There are (*e.g.*) some excellent letters respecting Mr. ——, a schoolmaster at Moffat. These it would be a pity to suppress; and it might be hazardous to disclose them. Many such difficulties I might mention.

"2. But one difficulty remains, greater than any other; and that is, what to say or what to suppress in regard to his political opinions. I see that the bard was admonished on the subject of his heresies, and threatened with the loss of his place; and the letter which he wrote in his own

justification, is one of the finest of all his compositions. There are several poems that are political; most of them, indeed, of little importance: but there is one which, though short, is of great merit, — 'Libertie, a Vision.' This, of course, must not die: but the question, how far it might be right to venture the publication of it, and other things of the same delicate nature, at present, is one which the family ought to be consulted on, and which a stranger cannot presume to decide.

"3. There are many detached pieces of poetry, but chiefly in the form of songs, and written, I presume, for the musical work that is going forward. Possibly these may be paid for, and, of course, the property of the persons engaged in that work; and a stranger cannot pretend to publish them without their permission.

"4. There is a very considerable number of letters from Burns' correspondents, some of them very good in themselves, and others which would be interesting, as coming from persons of celebrity. A few of these it would be desirable to intermix with those of the bard: but how shall a stranger presume to do this?

"5. Not one of the copies of his own letters is dated; and, therefore, a stranger cannot arrange them in the order of time, so as to make

them convey a history of his mind. Persons perfectly acquainted with the poet might be able, from the contents of these MSS., to form a pretty exact notion of their date, and thus supply the deficiency; but a stranger cannot do this.

"I might go on enumerating the difficulties, of which these are only a part, that stand in the way of my undertaking to be the editor and biographer of Burns: but I am fatigued, and probably tedious.

"You will readily believe me when I tell you that I did not foresee these; nay, I could not possibly foresee them, till the papers were put into my hands; — put into my hands, not selected and arranged as I expected, but with the whole toil and responsibility thrown upon me.

"In this situation, you will not be surprised that I feel an anxious wish to decline the undertaking, if any other person can be found to engage in it. Edinburgh, doubtless, is the place where the publication should be made; and, among the men of letters there, I earnestly hope that some one perfectly qualified for the task may yet be found, willing to engage in it. He that has leisure, and advantages for the proper performance of it, will receive the blessings of the widow and fatherless, and hand down his name with

honour to posterity. But, — to speak my mind to you freely, — though the subject has so much interest, yet there are so many delicacies belonging to it, and the materials are so scattered and so peculiar, that a very great deal depends on the taste, and delicacy, and judgment, of the biographer.

"My friend Roscoe has given very exactly my opinion of the manner in which it should be executed. But I will be a little more particular.

"The scheme he has mentioned under No. 4. is that which was adopted by Mason in his Life of Gray. The execution was, however, poor; and the whole work is, to me, languid and uninteresting. Gray's life afforded little incident: his sentiments were refined, even to fastidiousness; and his poetry, excellent as it is, afforded no great scope for original criticism. There are several circumstances in the history of Burns, that give greater scope to his biographer. The rise and progress of this daring peasant exhibits an interesting picture of the power and of the evolution of original genius, and naturally connects with, and even introduces, details concerning the condition and character of the Scottish peasantry, their lives and opinions, which, to an English reader at least,

will have the attraction of novelty. The poet painted nature, and particular nature: he gives to all his exhibitions of character, persons; — to all his displays of passion — persons, character, and scenery. Besides this, his peculiar cast of poetry, formed in a great measure on the models of his own country, naturally introduces some observations on the poetry of Scotland; — a subject on which I have read nothing, but on which I have occasionally ruminated, as I have *crooned*, in my solitary journeyings, the old ballads of our ancient bards; all of whom Burns greatly surpassed.

"To show what it is in the poetry of Burns that so strangely takes hold of the heart, even at times in defiance of the taste, may open some views into the sympathies of our nature, and into the powers by which poetry charms.

"The errors and faults, as well as the excellencies, of Burns' life and character, afford scope for painful and melancholy observation. This part of the subject must be touched with great tenderness; but it must be touched. If his friends do not touch it, his enemies will.

"To speak my mind to you freely, it appears to me that his misfortunes arose chiefly from his errors. This it is unnecessary and, indeed, improper to say; but his biographer must keep it

in mind, to prevent him from running into those bitter invectives against Scotland, &c. which the extraordinary attractions and melancholy fate of the poet naturally provoke. Six Liverpool poets have sung the requiem of our admired Bard; and every one of them has indulged in the most pointed, and in some degree unjust, invectives against the country and the society, in which he lived.

"I have thus given you a sketch of the difficulties which a person in my situation must have, in executing the task that has devolved on me, as well as my notion how it should be executed. I give the first, that you and the family of the bard may yet consider of the subject; and as you are going into Edinburgh, that you may consult with the friends of his family there, and procure, if possible, some man of letters on the spot to undertake his biography, &c.: if you find any one so disposed, you can extract from my letter what respects the materials, that he may the better be enabled to judge of them.

"In addition to what I have mentioned to you of the difficulties in my undertaking the business, I have to mention to you that I am at this moment engaged in a medical work, which will not be off my hands before Midsummer; and till then, that I cannot put pen to paper on

the subject; and that such are my incessant toils and my delicate health, that it will be impossible for me to *undertake for the publication* before Midsummer 1798, if then.

"I mention all these particulars, that the family may not form any expectations that may be disappointed.

"Finally, if under all these circumstances you and G. Burns (who I see, by his letters, is a man of extraordinary understanding,) think it more for the benefit of the family that I should be the editor and biographer, I have only to say, that no expectation of the widow and the fatherless shall be disappointed, as far as my health and my talents will permit; provided always, that you come here and read over and explain all the MSS., and that you procure me such letters, &c. of the Bard, as Edinburgh and Ayrshire can afford, and in short, undertake all the correspondence in Scotland; also, that while in Edinburgh, you and Cunningham consult together over this letter, and exert yourselves to smooth my difficulties. I must have the old Scottish poets, &c. On this subject pray consult Mr. Dugald Stewart, and get Creech to send every thing that he thinks will be useful. I have got Ferguson, but not Ramsay, nor any of the various collections.

"I understand that Gilbert Burns is now, or will soon be, in Dumfries. Shew him this letter, and consult with him. I must trust to him for the early part of the incidents — to you for the latter.

"I wish you to go into Edinburgh and fix the whole affair with as little as possible delay, because my friend Roscoe is gone to London; and if I am to undertake this business (which I pray to God may be otherwise ordered), he will have some conversation with the booksellers there before he returns. I doubt if a subscription be the proper way; probably a sum of money may be procured for disposing of the whole. I cannot allow my name to be hawked in a subscription paper; but this is an after consideration.

"I perceive that Graham of Fintry was a most sterling friend of the Bard: I think he ought to be consulted on the subject. You may assure him that my opinion is, that the work should be made as free as possible of offence, in a party view; that it should be literary and critical chiefly.

"When you have considered all this, write to me. Keep my name, I pray you, as much as possible out of the public mouth. I sicken

when I see it in the newspapers (as I sometimes do), whether for applause or censure.

"I can hold my pen no longer.

"Yours always,

"JAMES CURRIE.

"3 o'clock in the morning,
"February 8. 1797.

"P. S. Do me the favour to keep all my letters on this subject, and bring them with you. I cannot copy any thing I write."

To Alexander Cunningham, Esq., Edinburgh.

"Liverpool, March 1. 1797.

"MY DEAR SIR,

* * * * * * * * * * * *

"What I address you on now is the necessity of a speedy determination whether the task of editorship, &c. is to devolve on me, or whether some better man is willing to undertake it; and I write to you, because I presume Syme is in Edinburgh, and has communicated the contents of my letter to you, as I mean that you should communicate this to him.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

"If I had been aware that I was so much committed on the subject, I believe I should not have stated my objections to Syme so

strongly: but I found myself so wholly unsupported in the business, that I wished to state my objections and difficulties fully beforehand, that, in case my execution was slow or imperfect, less blame might attach.

"I shall be happy to resign the MSS. to a respectable and independent man; but I would not have the family of this great genius to suppose I am afraid to undertake toil or trouble. If they cannot dispose of the task more to their advantage, they may devolve it on me, as I have before said: I will task their patience only, and the public candour.

"Still, in this case, Syme or you, or, if possible, both of you, must come here to peruse the MSS. with me; and you must bestir yourself in Scotland, as your judgment directs you, in procuring materials; on which subject I will write to you at large, when the point is settled.

"I perhaps may be ready in the winter of 1798 with the work; but I stipulate for the summer following.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

"There is no occasion for publishing every thing now, that is to be published. The great duty is to collect now, before things are lost; and to publish at present only what is fit, leav-

ing doubtful matter for other editors and after-times.

"I shall not write to Creech: in short, I must be considered as the stomach, that digests what is put into it, not as the hand that gathers, or the head that directs.

"If you can come and lend a hand, it will give us pleasure: at all events, Syme will and must come.

"After all, I begin to fear the impending tempest may prevent this publication. What an awful gloom hangs over us!

"In haste, I am, my dear Sir,

"Yours, very faithfully,

"JAMES CURRIE."

To John Syme, Esquire, Dumfries.

"Liverpool, April 28. 1797.

"MY DEAR SYME,

"I now address you on the affairs of Mr. Burns. I have spoken to a printer — a fellow of genius and fire — the same that printed Lorenzo de' Medici, who undertakes the office not with willingness but ardour; and, being a North of Ireland man, he is an adept in the dialect of Scotland, and, on that account, may be employed with advantage. I wish, therefore, to set him to work to print with as little as possible

delay; for we have agreed that the works may be begun to be printed before the biography, and with advantage as well as convenience.

"The principal part of the poetry to be printed will consist of his songs, 120 in number, which Cunningham informs me Mr. Thomson will transmit to me, perfectly correct, as finally touched by the bard's hand; and, till these are received, we can do nothing; for the copies here are, I dare say, imperfect, being in general the rude and first draughts, and there are so many variations, that it is impossible to say what he finally rested in. I wish these sent without delay. Mr. Thomson has, I understand, a very valuable collection of letters on the subject of these songs, and of song-writing in general, which he wishes to retain; but, as these will be the only part of his correspondence generally interesting, I think it very unfair that it should not be given up to the use of the family; and I have mentioned this to Cunningham, declaring that I could not undertake the editorship, unless they were sent to me.* I beg you will enforce this, for the materials in my hands are very scanty, and in many respects defective. The dead poet, his surviving family, and his living

* These were given up by Mr. Thomson in the handsomest manner. — See *Life of Burns.* Ed.

editor, ought to have fair play. With every advantage, the expectations of the public will be disappointed.

"I wish you also to lose no time or fair opportunity in transmitting the remaining materials in your hands, and in collecting, wherever you think you can collect. I have got some things from Dr. Moore, and shall get more. Burns corresponded with a Miss Craik, a poetess, and in one of her replies to him, I see he had given her a critique on Johnson's Lives of the Poets. I wish that letter could be recovered; — it would be very curious, even if it contained an opinion only. Can you do any thing to get it? If you apply to the lady, your way would be to ask for all the letters of his that she may have.

"In the same way you may perhaps collect other things of value. I will look over his correspondents' letters as soon as I can; and probably I may suggest several things for you to do, from the hints they offer. In the mean time, I submit it to you whether it might not be proper to put an advertisement into the Edinburgh papers, mentioning that a publication of Burns' posthumous Letters and Poems is preparing, for the benefit of the family, and requesting that persons in possession of any of such poems or letters, would forward them to A. Cunningham in Edin-

burgh, or yourself in Dumfries. If necessary, I will get a similar advertisement in the London papers, appointing Dr. Moore the receiver. This is all that strikes me at present. If I disgrace myself, my country, and my subject, you will have much to answer for: but I am fairly embarked.

"Yours affectionately,

"JAMES CURRIE."

To the Same.

"Liverpool, August 11. 1797.

"MY DEAR SYME,

"Though I have, in some degree, anticipated the object of yours of the 1st of August, in a letter which must have reached you about the 2d or 3d, and which I am rather surprised not to see noticed in your postscript of the 6th; yet as it is important at the present moment that we should understand each other, I sit down to reply to it without delay.

"First, as to Burns. If copies had been forwarded me of the printed pieces that are to go into the posthumous publication, or correct copies of any part of his works, as was promised, the printers might have been going on, and the work advancing. But the unaccountable delay

of —— and ——, and the accountable delay of your visit here, has rendered it impossible to commence the work. For my own part, I have had, as you know, a confused and undigested mass of sketches and scraps thrown upon me, without explanation, and without dates or arrangement. Several of these are the first rude sketches of songs, correctly printed, but which I have never seen; and though I requested Elphinstone Balfour to apply to Cunningham to send me copies of the printed songs, they are not come in a packet of Scotch publications he has sent me. What is essential, or at least important, is to have all the materials before us, — after this, to have the whole examined by one acquainted with their history, — then to decide what is to be published, — then how, and in what order. All this is not so difficult, if you and I were a few days together, and had the assistance of Roscoe and M'Creery. But then you must bring every thing with you that you can lay your hands on, and, among other things, the letters you may have received on the subject from various quarters, my own included; for, among these, hints and suggestions may be found that are important.

"When you come here, I have a bed and a private room for you. There I will set you to

work, with pen and ink before you; and I will be with you as much as I can. Till our work is done, you shall not accept a single invitation, nor look at the wonders of Liverpool. You shall be as retired and as abstemious as a hermit; and you shall rise with the sun, and go to bed as he goes down.

"Your coming, however, is essential: and, that you may understand how much so it is, I declare most solemnly that if you do not come, I will write to G. Burns, and publish a manifesto abandoning the work. It is no matter, however, whether you come instantly, or by the 20th or 25th, or the end of the month.

"I am very sorry to hear of Heron's undertaking; and I wish he were remonstrated with. It is a scandalous thing for any one to interfere with the family on an occasion like this. For the same reason, I was particularly sorry to see the biography of Burns in the Monthly Magazine, which is very correct, and very circumstantial, and contains almost every thing that can be said. I have written to enquire who is the author.

"Why do you make such perpetual apologies about hurry, the excise business, or rather stamp-office business, &c.? I can assure you that these apologies only remind me of the extent of my

obligations for the time you devote to my affairs, and have never once been necessary for any neglect or inattention, or even for any obscurity of composition.

"For my part, I make no apologies, though God knows I am in a perpetual bustle, as you will see.

"Very faithfully yours,

"J. CURRIE."

These letters show Dr. Currie's warm sympathy on the death of Burns, and his desire to give an effectual proof of it by serving the family; his hope that some judicious and well-written account of the poet and his writings would appear; the serious obstacles which the distance, his profession, and his precarious health presented to his taking up the pen; yet the generous philanthropy which finally overcame every other consideration, and led him to undertake the task.

One indispensable condition, it appears, of Dr. Currie's engaging in this arduous undertaking, was that Mr. Syme should pay a visit to Liverpool, in order to give him such information as to the MSS. and the latter years of Burns, as it was impossible for a stranger to possess. For a similar reason he also invited Mr. Gilbert

Burns, the brother of the poet, to accompany Mr. Syme; and in the autumn of 1797, these two gentlemen arrived in Liverpool. Bound to his memory by the ties of kindred and affection, intimately acquainted with his pursuits and habits, his thoughts and feelings, they were well qualified to supply Dr. Currie with the information which he desired, and which was, in fact, essential to the proper execution of his task. In the course of their visit of a fortnight, he accordingly obtained from them the most ample and interesting personal details, and much important assistance in the arrangement and elucidation of the numerous MSS.

It was determined that the work should be published by subscription; and Dr. Currie, in addition to that part for which he was more particularly responsible, undertook to make the necessary arrangements with the booksellers and printer, and to superintend the publication. A negotiation was soon after concluded by him with the London publishers (Messrs. Cadell and Davies), who behaved with a liberality very honourable to their character; at once agreeing to take upon themselves the risk of the promised or expected subscriptions to the intended volumes, and also to relieve the widow and family from all anxiety or farther trouble

attending their publication. To those persons who were not eye-witnesses, it would be difficult to convey an idea how much Dr. Currie's labours were increased by the necessity of attention to all these details. Indeed, he found himself embarked in an undertaking, which consumed much valuable time, that would have been otherwise employed on subjects connected with his profession. He was, however, fortunate in finding in Mr. John M'Creery*, the personal friend of Mr. Roscoe and himself, a printer, whose admiration of Burns was ardent. Generous in feeling, a lover of literature, and a worshipper of genius, Mr. M'Creery entered with enthusiasm on the task. Many unavoidable causes, notwithstanding, concurred to retard the appearance of the work, which did not come out until May, 1800, nearly four years after the death of Burns, under the title of "The Works of Robert Burns; with an Account of his Life, and a Criticism on his Writings: to which are prefixed some Observations on the Character and Condition of the Scottish Peasantry," in 4 vols. octavo. It was dedicated to his friend, Captain Graham Moore, of the Royal Navy.

The completion of his toilsome task was re-

* See the letter to Mr. Syme, p. 286.

paid by general admiration of the manner in which it had been executed; and the obtaining 1200*l.* from the booksellers for the family of Burns, amply compensated for many a sleepless night and weary hour. Testimonies of approbation poured in from every quarter; and his literary reputation became not inferior to his character and name as a physician.

In the midst of these pleasing indications of the public feeling, he was naturally desirous of knowing, before the publication of a second edition, which was very soon called for, the sentiments of those persons, who were peculiarly qualified to pronounce an opinion; and he wrote, in consequence, to Mr. Gilbert Burns, and to Mr. Syme. The answer from the former, written four months after the Life was published, is given in this place, as are also extracts from Mr. Syme's letters on the subject; and it will be seen that the testimony of these gentlemen was not less gratifying than it may be said to be conclusive, as to the correctness of the picture which Dr. Currie had drawn. Gilbert Burns expresses himself "perfectly satisfied, and highly delighted," and merely points out some trifling corrections, chiefly as to dates and names, which in no way affect the execution of the work itself. Nor does the admirable letter to Dr. Currie,

which he speaks of sending, and which, written with the knowledge that it would be published, appears in the second edition, point out any statement respecting the poet which he wished to be altered.

To Dr. Currie.

"Dinning, August 24. 1800.

"Dear Sir,

"I have read over the Life and Correspondence of my brother again and again; and am astonished to find so little to object to. On the contrary, I could not have supposed that the materials you were possessed of could have furnished so respectable a work. The Life, if I am not misled by my connection with the subject, is a singularly pleasing and interesting work. There are one or two mistakes, which I will mention to you. The first is the poet's birth-day, said to be the 29th, which ought to have been the 25th of January. Page 64., line third from the top, Mount Oliphant ought to be inserted in place of Loan-house. A trifling misstatement, scarcely worth noticing, — Robert borrowed a little pony from a neighbour for his first journey to Edinburgh, which he returned by the carrier. I suppose you know that the young lady on the banks of the Devon, 'once

a sweet bud on the braes of the Air,' is Dr. M'K. Adair's wife.

"I never understood that Mr. Miller gave my brother the choice of any farm but Ellisland, on which Mr. Miller fixed the rent himself, but allowed my brother fifty-seven years of a lease, and to point out what restrictions he should be under in the management. I mention these things to you, not that I suppose they either will or ought to be taken notice of in a future edition, but that you may be as completely acquainted with all the matters of fact as possible.

"A small alteration will, perhaps, appear necessary to you in page 231., when I tell you that my brother's salary was continued to him till the day of his death, not by the generosity of the Board of Excise, but of a Mr. Stobbie, — a young expectant in the excise, who did the duty of my brother's excise division, without fee or reward, during his last illness. This circumstance had escaped my memory till Mrs. Burns, in looking over the passage, mentioned it to me; and I think it a pity that Mr. Stobbie (who appeared to me, when I saw him at the time of my brother's death, to be a modest worthy young man, and who is still, I believe, in the excise,) should be deprived of the honour due to him on this account.

"Allow me, Sir, to remark to you that your explanation of 'feck,' in Etrick Banks, is not agreeable to any use of the word I ever heard. Mony feck, between which no comma ought to be placed, means simply, very many. Thus Ramsay, or his correspondent Hamilton, I forget which, says, 'And the maist feck, hae seen't sinsyne, hae ca'd it tight, as that on Heck.'

"I have nothing original of my brother's but what you have seen; nor have I any alteration to propose. I am perfectly satisfied with your use of my communications, which in several instances are improved by your alterations. Indeed, I am perfectly satisfied and highly delighted with the whole of your work and arrangement. I should have been glad there had been fewer typographical errors: I felt for my friend M'Creery's fame on hearing this taken notice of. I think every Scotsman, and every candid person of any country, will read your prefatory remarks on a subject so new to philosophy with much interest. I may perhaps trouble you some time with a long letter, excited by your remarks on the books I recommended to Mauchline Conversation Club.

"Would it interfere with the booksellers' contract to let me have half a dozen copies printed with the second edition; for which I

would pay Mr. M'Creery's account for paper and printing? I want a copy for myself and for each of my three sisters, and to present a copy to each of two particular friends, to whom I am under peculiar obligations. The copy I have I intend to send to the club at Mauchline next week. I have no room, nor am I able to do justice to my feelings, to make acknowledgments to you for the singular obligations I and my brother's family lie under to you; and shall therefore conclude with subscribing myself,

"Your much obliged
"and devoted humble servant,
"GILBERT BURNS."

Extract from a Letter of Dr. Currie's to Mr. Syme, dated Liverpool, May 26. 1800.

"I thank you very much for what you so obligingly say of Burns' Life. Considering all my disadvantages, it will not I hope disappoint reasonable expectation: but what I wish particularly to know, is the impression I have made on *you* as to the general effect, and as to the prudence and propriety of my delineations; and as to their correctness. Have I touched the Bard with a rough or a lenient hand?

"Many things which might have been said, I have been compelled to omit by the circum-

stances of the times, and by the consideration that I was publishing the Life for the benefit of the widow and children. When you are at leisure, I will expect you to read the volumes with the pen in your hand, and to make your remarks on my errors; or, in fact, on any point that strikes you. And, as the booksellers say a second edition will be required early, I wish you to do this as soon as is convenient."

Extracts from Mr. Syme's Letters to Dr. Currie, after the Publication of the Works of Burns, dated from Dumfries.

"September 3. 1800.

"Now, what can I say respecting Burns' publication? I confess with sorrow that you have had that universe on your shoulders from first to last, and little or no aid have you received. I felt and I feel so; but it has been, and continues to be, impracticable to move ——, and my time is engrossed with such various and desultory attentions, that I cannot stick closer to the business. * * * * * * * I have the high pleasure of receiving from *every quarter* the most grateful attestations of the merit of your production. I enclose you one, which is worth a thousand. With regard to the impression which your biographical work has

made on me and Mr. William Dunbar (Inspector General of Stamp Duties for Scotland), it is such as we cannot easily describe. I declare to you we never read a piece of writing that does more credit to the author. The meanest fellow here sounds its praise, and that is perhaps a stronger testimony than the trumpet of the literati." — "I have noted some matters and explanations on the margin of the rough copy first sent me; and Gilbert Burns, who is to breakfast with me to-morrow, is to furnish more."

Some weeks after this, Dr. Currie wrote as follows: —

"October 10. 1800.

"My dear Syme,

"Having on another sheet of paper discussed my own private affairs, I sit down to say a few words on Burns.

"The very kind manner in which you express your opinion of the execution of the task you assigned me, is in a high degree pleasing to me. I pay much deference to your taste, and to your moral feelings; I have entire confidence in your sincerity; and setting aside the partial influence which our friendship may produce on your judgment, you are better qualified to decide on the Life of Burns than any man now alive. That

the portrait I have drawn has considerable power and interest, strangers to the subject may perceive; and this, indeed, the world seems disposed to allow. But how far it resembles the original, the most important point in regard to every portrait, those only can judge, to whom the original was known; and in this respect your decision, whatever it may be, admits of no appeal. That it is favourable, I am led to infer from your sentiments of general approbation. I am led to presume it, also, from having had the assistance of your observations in the character I formed of Burns. Yet, I wish you to speak to this point particularly, — and with your wonted sincerity. The praise of fine composition, if I might aspire to it, strikes my ear but faintly; but to be able to exhibit to the world the exact lineaments of this great and original genius, is an object of ambition which a greater artist than I am, might be proud to attain.

"So much for yourself. Let me thank you also in a particular manner for the letter of Mr. Anderson, to whose superior character I am no stranger, and of whose extraordinary attainments I have before heard. The high opinion he expresses of the letters of Burns is, I find, very generally entertained by the best judges. I doubt if English literature contains any com-

positions of the same nature equal to them. This sentiment has been expressed to me by Dr. Aikin, perhaps the best of our living critics. Dr. Aikin had prepared a Life of Burns for his biographical work; but he writes to me that, since he saw our work, he has thrown his intended article aside, and is preparing another more worthy of our poet. Nothing can be more flattering than the very high estimation of Aikin for the genius of Burns, and his entire assent to the character we have given of it. I have received from a great variety of other quarters; from Dugald Stewart, Fraser Tytler, Alison at Edinburgh, from Lady E. Cunningham, &c. very obliging communications; from Moore, Mackintosh, Percival, Ferriar, Sharp, Smyth, Whishaw, Scarlett, and a great number of others in England and Ireland; and, though last not least, from Messrs. Cadell and Davies, warm commendations. I am quite satiated with this species of gratification, of which, however, from proper quarters, no one can have a better relish. Some of the letters of the persons I mention, and of others, contain general criticisms, and valuable reflections. I could send you a selection along with the excellent letter of Mr. Anderson, but that your time would scarcely permit you to read them. Among others, I have a valuable communication

from Mr. Ramsay of Ochtertyre. I will arrange a parcel of these, and send them for your winter evenings' amusement. I have mentioned to you before the great sale in Liverpool, and indeed over England in general. * * * * If I am right in my supposition, our works are likely to get better through the British Critic than I suspected they would. Except the Critical Review, no other periodical work has noticed them. The Critical seems disposed to assign them a large space. Two numbers are occupied by the Life alone — and the critical observations are not touched yet — nor a word said of the writings themselves.

"I am scribbling to you at a late hour of the night — I grow obscure — sleep steals upon me — I must not, however, conclude without acknowledging the very kind interest you take in my son. He is better, and I hope likely to recover.

"I will write again to-morrow. In the mean time, adieu.

"Yours very affectionately,

"JAMES CURRIE."

On the 16th October, Mr. Syme replied to Dr. Currie: — "The portrait you have drawn, I assure you, is as genuine as masterly — the linea-

ments are marked with such boldness and truth, that none but an intimate like me can feel the full — I would use my own expression here — the sublime force of the resemblance. Naturally you are happy in producing the image of greatness — the contemplation of it warms you — inspiration comes and guides your pen to a peculiar and appropriate representation of it — and I give you my declaration, that my astonishment will never cease while regarding your work. Pray send me the letters you mention. I am curious to read the Reviews, as I think I can well judge of the justness of their criticisms on the work and character." And on the 3d March, 1802, Mr. Syme expressed his matured opinion in the following passage: — "Need I repeat that the world without exception, in so far as I ever could learn, accumulates on you fame and honour for your Life of Burns. It is the most interesting, elegant, and affecting production in existence. This is my own conviction, and I am able to feel the truth of that expression which you have given it."

The above passages in the letters of Mr. Syme are all that relate to Burns. The rest refer to Dr. Currie's private affairs.

Dr. Currie received various letters from Gilbert Burns afterwards, in which he repeats the

expression of the obligations which the family were under; but in none of them is there a syllable indicating the slightest objection to, or disapprobation of, the character of his brother, which Dr. Currie had published. The family and intimate friends of Burns — those who may be supposed to have known him best and loved him most — expressed themselves perfectly satisfied; and at a time, too, when the jealous sensibility of affection, assisted by the strength of comparatively recent recollections, must have naturally been strongly alive to any errors, into which Dr. Currie might unconsciously have fallen. Many opportunities were afforded for their correction, had they existed, in the subsequent editions which came out during his lifetime. Dr. Currie lived more than five years after the first appearance of his work; and from the family and friends of the poet, from private correspondents, and from public notice, he met with general approval of the delicacy and feeling, the skill and discretion, and the judgment and taste, with which, under circumstances of much difficulty, he had executed his task. While he lived, not a whisper, indeed, reached his ear from any quarter, which could convey the idea that, by "exaggerated statements" or "unfounded misrepresentations," he had done any injustice

to the memory of him whom he so much admired, and whose fame it was his wish to perpetuate. His Life of Burns*, which had passed through four editions of 2000 copies each, was deservedly become one of the most admired biographical productions in the language; and he died under the grateful impression that his benevolent exertions, and his disinterested sacrifice of time and health, had been crowned with entire success, and that the seal of public estimation had been affixed to his labours.

How little Dr. Currie anticipated the sort of censure that he seems since to have incurred in some quarters, may be seen from the following postscript in a letter to the Rev. George Duncan, written shortly after the Life of Burns was published: —

"I desired a copy of Burns to be sent you. I long to hear what you think of my biography. If I have softened somewhat the deep shade of his errors, you will not find, I trust, that I have

* Extract from a Letter from Dr. Currie to Captain Graham Moore, R. N., dated 16th May, 1802: — "I have a letter from Montpellier. A professor there has translated the preliminary discourse to the Life of Burns, with Burns' own Life in his letter to your father. I have not seen it; but in his notes he pretends to account for the extraordinary value of the Scottish troops, exemplified, as he says, in Egypt, by the circumstances mentioned in my preface."

compromised the interests of virtue. Burns is not held up for imitation, but the contrary; though I have endeavoured to do justice to his talents and to the better qualities of his heart, and to cast a veil of delicacy and of sympathy over his failings and his destiny. In this way I am disposed to think the cause of virtue is best consulted. It is thus, I would persuade myself, that the melancholy precepts of example are best inculcated on the feeling heart."

The writer has dwelt longer upon the preceding subject than either delicacy might have justified, or inclination would have permitted; because, since his father's death, though not, as far as he can learn, till many years afterwards, various admirers and biographers of Burns (and, amongst others, Gilbert Burns himself,) have appeared before the public, whose declared object has been to vindicate his memory from the exaggerations and misrepresentations affecting his character, which Dr. Currie is charged by them with having admitted into his Life. It is not, however, intended to enter upon the ungrateful field of controversy, nor is it necessary. The facts above stated sufficiently speak for themselves.

The following communication from Mr. Fraser Tytler, (afterwards one of the Lords of Session,

by the title of Lord Woodhouselee,) alluded to in a preceding letter to Mr. Syme, is a gratifying testimony to the propriety of the course which Dr. Currie adopted in treating of the character of Burns, and conveys a general approbation of the work, which was particularly welcome from a man of such acknowledged taste and judgment.

To Dr. Currie.

"Edinburgh, July 8. 1800.

"Dear Sir,

"I sit down to thank you for the very high pleasure I have received from the perusal of the *Life and Works of Burns.* Your part in that publication does you infinite honour, as an able writer and judicious critic. I do not recollect ever to have met with a more pleasing or instructive piece of biography than your Life of our illustrious bard; and I give you credit particularly for the fine moral lesson which you have so powerfully inculcated, (a lesson useful indeed to all, but of particular utility to men of splendid talents,) from the latter scenes and melancholy termination of that bright but violent career. The delicacy, too, with which you have painted the defects of our poor friend, without impairing the force of the moral picture, is deserving of the highest praise. I know it

was the opinion of *some* friends of the bard's and of mine, that it were desirable, in any account of his life, that a veil should be thrown upon every circumstance of that unfortunate defect in the structure of his mind which you have well termed 'the weakness of volition,' and to which all his errors, and at length his fate, were assignable. But I ever thought that this was a false and a fastidious refinement, and that the biographer of poor *Burns* would fail in the main part of his duty, if he neglected strongly to enforce, but with a delicate hand and feeling heart, that most important moral document which a true delineation of his character and life supply. Surely the purpose of biography is not to 'soothe the dull, cold ear of death,' but to warn and instruct the living.

"On the incidental topics of discussion, as the observations on the character of the Scottish peasantry, the connection of patriotism with the social and domestic affections, the important question whether the bent of the genius should invariably be followed in education, — on all these subjects your observations are at once ingenious, just, and useful. But as one is more particularly struck when he meets with a continued train of thought which *reflects*, as it were, his own opinions, and even those which he has

deliberately committed to writing, so I have been singularly pleased with your critical observations on the genius of *Allan Ramsay*, and with your apology for the use of the Scottish dialect in our native poetry, which so wonderfully coincide with what I have recently given to the public, in the new edition of the poems of *Ramsay*, that I am persuaded every reader will conclude that we had exchanged our thoughts upon the subject, in the most ample and unreserved discussion. I know not whether you have yet seen the new edition of Ramsay printed by Strahan, and published by Cadell and Davies, and published a few weeks ago. I am sure, when you see it, you will be struck with the coincidence as well as I. The only part I have in that edition is the *Remarks on the Genius and Writings of Ramsay*, an essay of about 100 pages. With the life of the poet, the arrangement of the works, &c., I have no concern whatever.

* * * * * *

"Wishing you, dear Sir, every thing that is good and prosperous, and trusting that, when you visit this country, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you, I am, with esteem,

"Your most obedient, and most faithful,

"Humble servant,

"ALEXANDER FRASER TYTLER."

The editor cannot resist the temptation of adding to the foregoing testimony an extract from a letter written to Dr. Currie by Professor Dugald Stewart,—an illustrious name, which recalls all that is profound in philosophy, generous in sentiment, and elegant in literature:—

"Edinburgh, September 6. 1800.

"I ought long before now to have thanked you for the very great pleasure I have received from your late publication, which reflects equal honour on your benevolence and on your literary talents. The strong and faithful picture you have given of Burns is an important accession to our stock of literary biography; and the incidental reflections you have contrived to interweave with the narrative, cannot fail to be of essential utility to the very different descriptions of men who are likely to be your readers. I have much yet to say on the subject; but every moment of my time is at present so completely occupied, that I have little prospect of being able soon to offer more than very general expressions of my satisfaction. If I should be able to command a little more leisure before the conclusion of autumn, I shall trouble you with another letter. Believe me ever, with great regard,

"Yours, most faithfully,

"DUGALD STEWART."

The sentiments of Dr. Currie respecting the important effects of national education upon the character of a people, are recorded in his observations on the Scottish peasantry prefixed to the Life of Burns. It appears by a note to these observations, (Vol. I. Appendix, No. 1. Note A.) that a law, providing for the instruction of the poor in Ireland, passed the Irish parliament, but that the fund was diverted from its purpose, and the measure entirely frustrated, — a circumstance which Dr. Currie notices with expressive disapprobation. When the Union was under final discussion in the Irish parliament, in the beginning of 1800, he wrote the following letter to a most intimate and highly respected friend, who was on the point of taking his seat in the House of Commons : —

To Francis Trench, Esq., Dublin.

" Liverpool, March 18. 1800.

" My Dear Trench,

" Your account of the altercation between Corry and Grattan was certainly very amusing. Grattan is a hard-bitten and high-mettled fellow. Though I am against him on the Union, I should detest all these mean and vulgar attempts to bear him down. He seems, however, to

despair, for I do not see that he speaks any more.

"This opposition is good for Ireland. I believe in my conscience it has got for her conditions she would not otherwise have had proposed. And the change of the basis of Irish representation, which has been introduced in the course of the business, pleases me a good deal. We shall really have rather a popular infusion into the imperial parliament, instead of a miserable Scotch borough system. If there be any thing of practical importance in the nature of the representative basis, this change is very important.

"I am very glad you have accepted a seat in parliament, because I think there may be good done by it, both to yourself and to Ireland. Do not start, nor laugh, but listen.

"If I thought you were merely to sit in parliament to give your vote on a division, I do not know that I should have any great pleasure in your being returned, excepting as it might contribute to your own amusement or advantage.

"It is, indeed, necessary to carry the union. But the minister is already sufficiently strong both in arguments and in numbers, and the generous spirits that oppose him may be pressed down by more vulgar instruments.

"But I think you may be useful in a particular which seems to me of vast moment, and which, I think, is very little likely to be attended to.

"Two countries have already been incorporated with England, — Wales and Scotland; and the effect of the union on the one and the other has been very different.

"Wales was united to England in the barbarous ages. Her own institutions, of whatever rude nature, were beaten down, and no others substituted. No means were used to instruct the people in the common language of the island, or to improve their habits in any respect. Hence the peasantry of Wales are essentially different from the English, unfit to enter into competition with them, and, in fact, an inferior race. They are destitute in general of the first elements of knowledge, and, in their habits and turn of mind, the same in a great many respects (some of which I will enumerate to you) as they were three hundred years ago. But I wish you to enquire into their condition personally, on your way to Liverpool, which, if you land at Holyhead, you may easily do; and it will be worth your while to devote a few days to the subject. During the period that Wales has been represented in the

imperial parliament, not a single step has been taken for the civilisation of the people.

"It happened that the Scottish parliament established a system for the education of all classes of society, particularly of the poor, during the days of the Solemn League and Covenant. The restoration of the Stuarts overturned this system, as well as the present church establishment. Both were recovered on the Revolution, at least in the year 1696. In consequence, *both were incorporated into the union*, though neither was formed in contemplation of it. Had it not been for this circumstance, can it be supposed that Scotland would now possess a school establishment? Never. The high church prejudices of the English hierarchy would have prevented it. Yet it is by this institution that the Scotch have been civilised—by this, in a great measure, have they been enabled to receive any *positive* advantage from the union.

"Now you see what I would be at. Propose, for God's sake, some system of education for your poor in the first instance, and let it be incorporated with your union. You are going to incorporate your church establishment, which will entail many curses on the country. For mercy's sake, think of incorporating some system of instruction!

"If you see this as I do, it will strike you like lightning. I think well enough of Lord Castlereagh, and even of Corry, to make me suppose they may wish to adopt something of the kind, and I am sure your brother will see the thing in its proper colours. You must have an immense emigration, because you have a morbid population. If you send out *men*, they will live and flourish, and strike root again in their native soil. If *beasts*, they will die in misery, and manure foreign lands.

"When you come over, I will talk with you at large, and furnish you with documents. In the mean time, think, and reflect, and converse on this point; and consider, that the measure that may be founded on what I propose, successful or unsuccessful, is calculated to cheer your heart with the consciousness of a noble purpose, and to erect an everlasting monument over your grave.

"But communicate, I beg of you, with your brother only, and do not let the measure go out of your or his hands. I have been led into this train of thinking, by considering of the present character and condition of the Scottish peasantry.

* * * * * * *

Adieu, my dear friend,

"Yours, J. C."

The publication of the Life of Burns brought Dr. Currie into epistolary intercourse with many literary men of celebrity. Amongst others, Sir Walter (then Mr.) Scott may be named, who wrote to him respecting his intended work, the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. The narrative of a very affecting incident, extracted from one of Dr. Currie's letters, is inserted in the notes to that publication, and will be found in the present work. The original letter, with two others, was, indeed, transmitted to the editor by that justly celebrated writer, accompanied with the following kind expressions: — "In sending you the enclosed three letters of your venerable and excellent father, I am proud and happy to contribute my mite to his fame, or, as we say on the moors, to add a stone to his cairn."

Lord Cullen (son of Dr. Cullen, whose name has been more than once mentioned in these pages) applied to Dr. Currie for assistance in writing the life of his father. After the battle of Alexandria, the manuscript journal of General Moore, who fell at Corunna too soon for his country, but in the fulness of his fame*, was

* Unusual pains have been taken to detract from the reputation of this gallant soldier. But the day is at length arrived, when noble justice has been done to his memory by Col. Napier, in his authentic and admirable History of the

offered to him, with a wish that he would write the history of the campaign in Egypt. But these and other applications neither his health nor his time would allow him to comply with.

Every year that the war with France continued, the exertions of Great Britain became greater; and on the prospect of invasion with which this country was threatened in 1798, they were redoubled. Voluntary contributions for the defence of the nation were followed by general arming and volunteer enrolments. The following extract from one of Dr. Currie's letters to his relative in Virginia will throw light on his feelings at this important period: —

"*Liverpool*, 15*th April*, 1798. — It is the fashion at the public schools now for the boys to subscribe for the defence of the nation. Our little hero* gave every farthing he had in his

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War in the Peninsula. In this the reader will find recorded also the testimony of the three greatest generals of modern times, in favour of Sir John Moore's military character and talents. — *See* vol. i. chap. 6. p. 529. Ed.

* The writer's early friend, James Currie, nephew of Dr. Currie of Richmond, Virginia, who was educated in England under the superintendence of Dr. Currie, succeeded to his uncle's property, and now resides in the state of Kentucky, on the borders of the Ohio.

pocket, and subscribed the whole of his allowance of pocket-money for the half year to boot. I heard of this from the master, and took care he should not suffer by his patriotism. He is a proud, and affectionate, and generous boy, — and bold as a lion. He has fought several battles for the honour of Scotland, with various success, but always with credit; for though he is little, and rather delicate to the eye, yet he is strong in his articulations, with a nervous arm and a fearless heart." —

"What shall I say to you of public affairs? We are in most awful times; and I cannot but believe that you will cast an eye of some regard and some anxiety on us, across the Atlantic. This summer we shall be invaded in England, Scotland, or Ireland, or perhaps in all three. I cannot believe that there will be any serious danger. We have an immense army, though not, perhaps, of the best organisation, and we have a maritime force such as the world never saw. The English military marine is superior to any force of the same kind that it can encounter, in a degree that exceeds the boasted superiority of the Macedonian phalanx or the Roman legion.

"Nevertheless, it is impossible to be quite easy: — the Alps, the Pyrennees, have dwindled

into mole-hills before the French, and they have crossed and re-crossed the Rhine as if it had been a rivulet. What new arts they may employ to procure unlooked-for success cannot be precisely determined; though I cannot, on reflection, *imagine* the means that can prosper an invasion of England or Scotland.

"It is not so as to Ireland. The country is universally disaffected, and is now held down by military force; and should the French land, they will meet, I fear, a very general welcome from the lower classes. In the mean time, Government are using every precaution to render all attempts to land abortive. Should the attempts of the French be powerfully made, and completely defeated, I trust that peace would soon follow. But such is the intoxication of their success, that, till they make the attempt, no peace can be expected.

"Poorly as I think of the measures of administration in the beginning of the war, I give them credit for great vigour at present. Every man who would not submit to a government of foreign bayonets, must join hand in hand now; and I trust that, with such a union, our island will be found invincible.

"The French are playing the devil every-

where: they acknowledge no rule of conduct but that of force; and it is dreadful to reflect that the whole Continent, Russia excepted, is at their feet! I am happy to be decidedly on the side of my country. By the time this reaches you, great events will have occurred. Breathe your wishes and your prayers, my dear fellow, for the old island. If we fall, expect no peace for America: expect civil war and foreign invasion, and the overthrow of your infant constitution.

"But let us hope for better things.

"Once more adieu.

"JAMES CURRIE."

At such a moment the town of Liverpool was not slow in answering the call of patriotism, and a public meeting was held to consider the best means of raising a body of men, for the defence of the town and neighbourhood. Dr. Currie attended this meeting, took a part in its proceedings, and was one of the committee appointed on the occasion. Writing to Mr. Syme on the 1st of May, he says, — "We are all arming here; I have caught a little of the mania, and am on the committee for conducting the armed associations, where, in spite of

my constant resolutions to hold my tongue, I talk a great deal more than is good for me." And a few weeks afterwards, — "I have subscribed for the equipment of ten men in the regiment raising for the defence of Liverpool and five miles round. I said but little at the public meeting, and what I did say was meant to give a little of order and method to the proceedings. I am very much, however, disposed to go to all extremities in resisting these proud invaders. All calamities are light to a Norman conquest, with which we are threatened."

In a letter to Mrs. Greg also, at this time, he expresses himself as follows: —

"11th May, 1798.

"I would have written to you before, but I looked for leisure and tranquillity, intending to give you a memorial on the peculiar circumstances of the moment; but I looked in vain, and my purpose has died away without effort.

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"The season requires every man to show the colours under which he ranges himself. Pitt is, indeed, a great evil; but a French invasion is still greater. Flushed with victory, and terrible

for valour and skill, these modern Normans 'come to win a kingdom or to lose themselves.' It is not our government but our national independence they attack. If we were republicans a hundred times over, their enmity would not be the less. If they succeed, they will settle with us, and our whole fabric of social institutions, as well as the arrangement of our property, will be broken up. The genius of the nation will be buried in the grave of our independence, and sleep, perhaps, for a century to come!

"It is a hard and bitter draught that we have to swallow, when we act with the men who have brought us where we are. But what can be done? I would rather be any thing than a pitiful Cisalpine, deliberating under the forms of a free government, but, in fact, subject to the bayonets of a foreign power. Pitt we shall get clear of sooner or later, but a foreign enemy will not be so easily expelled.

"I am, therefore, for every man declaring for the defence of the nation, and especially those, who have hitherto declared against the war.

"Yet I sigh and lament, and almost despair, when I think of green Erin; and sometimes I

am doubtful whether the conduct of our rulers there, does not mark out that Providence has doomed us to destruction!

"Adieu, my dear friend — I write at full gallop.

"Truly yours,

"J. C."

The protracted war with France filled our prisons; and the depôt for French prisoners at Liverpool was, in the year 1800, greatly crowded. The circumstances about to be stated gave rise to an interference on the part of Dr. Currie on their behalf, which subjected him to some unmerited calumny.

In the earlier years of the war, they were on the allowance usually made to prisoners of war in England. At that time a most unfounded clamour was excited, as if this allowance had been insufficient. A charge of this nature found its way to France, where it was adopted by the Directory, and, to suit the purposes of the moment, was transmitted to the armies, in order to excite their indignation against England. A negotiation between the two countries ensued, by which it was agreed that each country should take care of its own people;

and by this arrangement, the charge of maintaining the French prisoners in England was undertaken by France. To give a colour, perhaps, to their complaint, the French made their people a most extravagant allowance; but the Government was without credit, and remitted at great disadvantage and with difficulty. Buonaparte, when he seized the reins, broke the contract with a strong and unscrupulous hand: he assumed the maintenance of the small number of English in France, and threw on England the expense of maintaining the very considerable number of French in this country. Justly offended and disgusted, the British Government struck off a part of the allowance made to these men, under the erroneous opinion, prevalent at that time, that a man in captivity requires less for his sustenance than a common labourer at his daily work. The allowance, so curtailed, was let out by contract.

To the miseries of war were added, in the year above-mentioned, the apprehensions of scarcity, from an unusually bad and deficient harvest. The prices of food of all descriptions underwent a great advance; and the contractors in Liverpool saw that they should no longer be able, without ruin to themselves, to supply the stipu-

lated rations to the prison, either as to quantity or quality. Some addition to the contract prices was therefore made by Government; but the natural effect of the dearness of provisions was to render the contractors less exact than formerly as to both these particulars. The injurious consequences to the prisoners may be imagined; and these were increased by the fatal spirit of gambling to which they were addicted, and which led them, for the excitement of the hour, to stake their clothes and rations at play — heedless of the future want of clothing, or the more powerful calls of hunger. The rigours of winter approached, and deficient nutriment and cold were quickly followed by disease and death. The hospital was filled to overflowing. As the mortality became serious, this circumstance was mentioned to Dr. Currie, and he was requested to visit the prison by one of his medical friends, who had the official charge of the hospital, and whose opinion was, that the extraordinary increase of disease was attributable to a deficiency in the allowance of food, and to the want of clothing. So called on, Dr. Currie immediately repaired to the prison; and, struck by the squalid, shivering, and emaciated appearance and symptoms of its inmates, unhesitatingly concurred in the opinion just mentioned. That the

miseries of captivity should be aggravated by such a cause appeared to him as revolting to humanity, as he felt assured that it was repugnant to the intention, either of the English Government or its subordinate agents, the Transport Board. "He had always believed that the reduced allowance was considered in the nature of an experiment, to be adhered to or not, according to the event, which seemed strongly to discourage its continuance. He imputed no blame to his majesty's ministers: he did not believe that there were any men in the king's dominions less likely to be deaf to the calls of humanity; but, deeply involved in the variety of affairs which engrossed their attention, they must be supposed, he thought, on a subject of this kind, to be regulated by the opinions of men in subordinate situations,—men who were not, perhaps, more competent to judge rightly on a question of medical or physiological science than himself." * The subject, however, was one of extreme delicacy. Under such impressions, he urged the immediate interposition of the inspector of the prison to relieve the pressure of cold and hunger, and to stay the increasing mortality, which the register of successive months

* Letter to Sir Joseph Banks, of the 13th June, 1801.

was recording; offering, on the part of a few friends * and himself, a temporary supply of food and clothing, which was declined. On this occasion his indignation broke through the ordinary restraint imposed upon his feelings. His blood boiled within him at the thought that men might perish, while waiting for the sanction of authority to arrest the stroke of death.

Finding that official formalities prevented those prompt measures from being taken, which the emergency called for, he wrote a private letter at once to Sir Joseph Banks, with whom, as President of the Royal Society, he was in the habit of occasional correspondence. His reason for selecting this channel of communication was, that he knew Sir Joseph Banks to be not only a strong supporter of ministers, and in habits of intercourse with them, but personally acquainted with some of the members of the Board of Sick and Hurt, who had the superintendence of the prison hospitals. His letter, after having been shown to Mr. Pitt, and to Earl Spencer (First Lord of the Admiralty), was referred to this Board, and an investigation was ordered into the condition of the prisoners at Liverpool. The interference, however, of Dr. Currie was viewed

* Mr. Arthur Heywood, Mr. Roscoe, and Mr. Rathbone.

with undisguised displeasure by the Board, and censured by Sir Joseph Banks himself, as tending to cast an undeserved reflection on the Government, and as originating in party prejudice. It will not, therefore, excite surprise to learn that the Commissioners, deputed to make the investigation, arrived in Liverpool strongly prejudiced against Dr. Currie, (principally, it appeared, on account of his political reputation,) and disposed to view his interference as arising from opposition to Government, rather than from the dictates of philanthropy. Their conduct was such as betrayed great resentment at his having taken any steps in the business. This impression they were at no pains to conceal during their stay in Liverpool. They declined all personal communication, attempted to raise against him the ominous cry of *Jacobin*, and in other respects acted under the bitterest influence of party prejudice; but their miserable efforts were fortunately harmless. By this time the circumstances were become pretty generally known; and the Mayor of Liverpool (John Shaw, Esq.), after a personal inspection of the prison, had written to Government, calling for their interference. The investigation justified the conduct of Dr. Currie, and ended favourably for the French prisoners. Their al-

lowance of food was increased; clothing was distributed to the naked; their comforts were in other respects augmented; and judicious regulations for the prevention or detection of abuses, which had fallen into disuse, were revived.

It has since been asserted, by medical authorities of eminence, that the effect of confinement and sorrow upon the health and spirits is such, that persons under imprisonment require as much (if not more) nutriment to support them in health, as men of the same class who are at liberty. This must be especially applicable in the case of prisoners of war. *

* The Editor has been favoured with a letter on this subject from Dr. Roget of London, which contains the following passage: — "The unfortunate result of the experiment, tried on a large scale, of reducing the nutritious quality of the diet of the prisoners at the Millbank Penitentiary, tends strongly to establish the general conclusion, that, in order to preserve prisoners in a state of health, a more than ordinary supply of food is required to counterbalance the depressing operation of the moral causes attendant on the privation of liberty. But, perhaps, after all, the highest authority on the subject is that of Howard, quoted in the Report, of which I have sent you the extract." (*a*)

(*a*) "Mr. Howard remarks, that *persons in prison require more food than those who are free;* that is to say, the moral causes which excite depression of spirits, and consequently, when long continued, a decay of health, can only be lessened by propping up the strength of the prisoner, and

It is melancholy to reflect how often the feelings and judgment are warped, and the best intentions misrepresented, under the distorting and malignant influence of party spirit. In a case where common humanity and a proper regard for the honour of his country were his only motives, Dr. Currie fell under the imputation of acting from political hostility, disposed to view the actions of Government with an unfavourable eye; and was even set down as an enemy to his country: a charge at all times of the gravest nature, and at the period in question, of peculiarly injurious tendency, however malevolent and unfounded. But, as he observed in the letter to Sir J. Banks above quoted, *he was not a stranger to undeserved reproach; and had received it for actions of his life, on which he relied for the high consolations of an approving conscience. That he could have no motive of an improper nature — no intention of bringing any imputation on Government, — was sufficiently evinced by the person whom he addressed.* The subject is painful to dwell upon, and humiliating to human nature; and with the following fact,

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enabling him, through a full prison diet, to resist the effects of the mind upon the body." — *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Penitentiary at Millbank in* 1823, pp. 10, 11.

illustrative of the times, and confirmatory of what has been said, this assuredly heroic instance of benevolence, all the circumstances considered, will be dismissed:—The first question put by the Commissioners to one of the physicians attached to the hospital, from whom Dr. Currie had received information as to the condition of the prisoners, was, *how long he* (the individual examined) *had been a member of the Corresponding Society!* This fact is stated on the authority of the party himself, who is still living, and who, with indignant astonishment, repelled the ill-timed insinuation, for which there was no foundation, and who afterwards received a suitable apology from the Commissioners, and an assurance that they had been misinformed, before their arrival, as to the character and motives both of himself and Dr. Currie.*

* Four or five months after this occurrence, Dr. Currie, who had not visited the prison in the interval, had a commission from the Earl of Wycombe to pay a small sum of money to one of the French prisoners at Liverpool, which Lord Wycombe had received from a connection of this unfortunate person in France, and had promised to have safely conveyed to his hands. When writing to Lord Wycombe that he had executed his wishes, Dr. Currie naturally alluded to the condition of the prisoners in general, and stated that though some improvement had taken place in consequence of the visit of the commissioners, he understood that their diet was still defective. His letter was directly sent by Lord Wycombe to Earl St. Vincent, recently appointed to the head of the Admiralty, who, with the

From the contemplation of such scenes it is grateful to turn to subjects of a more agreeable

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promptitude and decision in the investigation of alleged abuses, which so remarkably characterised that gallant veteran, ordered immediate enquiry to be made into the facts. The result confirmed Dr. Currie's statement; and the reforms as to diet, previously commenced, were perfected without loss of time.

As the letters which passed between these noblemen are honourable to their characters, and on that account, deserving of being recorded, they are inserted here.

Letter from the Earl of Wycombe to Earl St. Vincent.

" Lansdown House, June 4. 1801.

" My Lord,

" The accident of my having been requested to transmit to one of the French prisoners at Liverpool a trifling sum which had been sent from Paris, induced me to apply to Dr. Currie, one of the most respectable physicians of that place, whom I requested to execute the commission I received.

" The letter which Dr. Currie has written to me upon this occasion contains a statement which I should not think myself justified in withholding from your Lordship; and I have the less scruple in troubling you with it, as it seems to me not improbable, that you may deem some enquiry into the business equally honourable to yourself and to the administration, of which you are so distinguished a member. I am about to leave town, and entreat you to believe that nothing but the fear of intruding upon time so valuable as yours, should have prevented me from paying my respects to you in person.

" I have the honour to be, my Lord,

" Your Lordship's faithful and obedient servant,

" Wycombe."

" Earl St. Vincent."

nature, where literature and science interpose their milder influence to soften the asperities of political feeling.

The want of additional accommodation as to a news-room and place of public resort, in times

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From Earl St. Vincent to the Earl of Wycombe in reply.

" Admiralty, June 6. 1801.

" My Lord,

" I cannot express the obligation I feel to your Lordship for the communication of Dr. Currie's letter, which I return. This Board had directed a flag-officer to take to his assistance a Commissioner of the Sick and Wounded Board, and one from the Transport Board, and investigate the prisons at Porchester Castle and Plymouth, with the hospitals attached to them ; and I am concerned to state, that great abuses were reported to exist in the supplies of bread and meat under the contracts ; but it has not appeared from the reports of these gentlemen, that the quantity of food allowed by Government is insufficient for the sustenance of persons who are not required to labour : both these reports, and others made under the direction of the late Board, describe the miseries of the prisoners to have arisen from vice, and thirst for tobacco ; and quote many instances of men paying out of their rations, losses at play, and disposing of their clothes and food for tobacco, — evils that the officers appointed to superintend these establishments have not yet been able to suppress. These gentlemen received their appointment from my predecessor, and seem to be well chosen. A letter I have this instant received from a very worthy man who has the care of the sick at Norman Cross, will, in some degree, confirm what I have written to your Lordship ; and I do assure you, that much of my time has been occupied in

when foreign and domestic intelligence increased every year in interest, had long been felt in Liverpool, and had frequently engaged the thoughts of a few individuals there, with the hope of removing the inconvenience. Towards the end of the year 1797 the idea was at length seriously taken up, and the opportunity was embraced of proposing that a library should be connected with such an institution. Political feeling was thrown aside, meetings were held, the requisite amount was subscribed, and the ATHENÆUM was opened in January, 1799.

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endeavouring to mitigate the sufferings of these poor fellows, in whose cause you are so laudably interested; and I have the honour to be, with great regard and esteem,

"Your Lordship's most obedient,
"Humble servant,
"ST. VINCENT."

In 1803, Lord St. Vincent visited His Royal Highness Prince William of Gloucester at Liverpool, and Dr. Currie had the gratification of becoming personally known to him. In the course of their conversation, Lord St. Vincent voluntarily mentioned the affair of the French prisoners, and thanked him for his interference in their behalf, adding, that he had had the greatest difficulty in getting at the truth on the subject; and that he had, on a subsequent occasion, had ample reason to be displeased with one of the persons engaged in the investigation, whom he had dismissed, and who had died in disgrace.

Dr. Currie had been summoned to the first meeting on this subject, but professional engagements prevented his attendance. At the second, however, he presided, and actively concurred in those subsequent measures to which the Athenæum owes its existence: and after it was established, he took a prominent part in its management for several years, especially in the formation of its library*, to the first printed catalogue of which he prefixed a short history of the origin of the institution.†

A year or two afterwards, another undertaking was set on foot, principally in consequence of the exertions of Mr. Roscoe, which has also contributed to reflect credit on the taste and liberality of the town of Liverpool. This was the Botanic Garden, in the establishment and formation of which Dr. Currie took a strong interest. Although in the midst of more important objects

* (1830.) Now containing 15,000 volumes.

† The true circumstances attending the rise of the Athenæum, the first public literary establishment which reared its head in Liverpool, are not generally known; and, as they were at a recent period inaccurately represented in some of the provincial journals, from which they were copied into the London papers, an accurate statement will be found in the Appendix. The Editor is indebted for it to the kindness of Dr. Rutter, one of the five individuals who originally met together upon the subject. See App. No. 6.

he had for many years neglected botanical pursuits, upon this occasion his ardour revived, and he entered into an active correspondence on the subject with his friend Dr. Wright, who was a distinguished botanist, and to whom the institution is indebted for much judicious advice at its outset, and for some valuable presents of books and specimens of dried plants.

But in 1801, the attention of Dr. Currie was engaged on a subject much nearer to his heart, and more closely connected with his professional duties. He had in that year the gratification of proposing and carrying by acclamation, in general vestry, a resolution, imperative on the church wardens and parish committee, for the immediate erection of a House of Recovery, or Fever Wards, for the reception of the poor when labouring under fever, — a disease at all times present in a large and populous town like Liverpool. The utility of such establishments had been incontestibly proved by the experience of Manchester and Chester, where they had existed some years, and where the fears entertained of the spread of contagion in the immediate neighbourhood of such buildings, had been found to be utterly groundless. "In cases of contagion (Dr. Currie remarks, Med. Rep. vol. i. p. 365.), the evils prevented are much greater than those remedied,

and the benefit is by this means extended from the patient himself to the circle by which he is surrounded. The establishment of such hospitals was first suggested by tracing the infection which propagates fever, to its origin, and ascertaining the power of ventilation and cleanliness in preventing and in alleviating the disease. The arguments for such hospitals are strengthened by the improved methods of destroying contagion; and if I do not greatly deceive myself, they are still further strengthened by the success of that mode of practice in fever, which it is the chief object of this publication to explain and to establish."

Under the influence of such views, Dr. Currie had, so early as March, 1796, brought forward and carried a proposal for the erection of a House of Recovery in Liverpool; but year after year passed, and nothing was done. The most ill-founded opposition was continually made, and the most vexatious obstacles were pertinaciously interposed, to the execution of a measure sanctioned by successive vestries. At length, in the year 1801, Dr. Currie's unwearied exertions were successful, and the plan was adopted almost without objection; it had from the first been unanimously recommended by the gentlemen of the faculty. From that time no further delay

occurred in the erection of an establishment,* which he has stated to be "pre-eminent in point of utility over all other hospitals, those for accidents that require the immediate assistance of surgery, perhaps, alone excepted."†

Upon the accomplishment of his favourite scheme, he wrote as follows to Mrs. Greg on the 21st of April, 1801: —

"Since I saw you I have not been wholly idle; I have at last succeeded in my favourite object of getting the parish to establish a hospital for contagious diseases, after fighting various battles for it. It might have been supposed, that in forwarding a business of this kind, the

* By a letter from Mr. Roscoe to Dr. Currie, dated April, 1805, it appears that when the Fever Wards were erected, and after Dr. Currie's departure from Liverpool, the spirit of hostility revived, and showed itself in an objection to complete and furnish them. The subject was constantly at Dr. Currie's heart, and he therefore wrote to Mr. Roscoe from Bath, begging his attention to it, — who in consequence attended a vestry, and carried a resolution to prepare the building for immediate occupation. The utility of the Fever Wards, it is gratifying to state, is no longer a matter of discussion in Liverpool. The experience of more than twenty years has convinced the most incredulous; and various important additions have been made at different times to this establishment, at the expense of the parish, to increase the comforts and accommodation of the patients — (1830).

† Medical Reports, vol. i. p. 365.

difficulty would have been with the many — with the annual vestry, who vote the money, rather than with the churchwardens and the parish committee. But the truth was otherwise. The annual vestry sanctioned the measure five years ago, provided it met the approbation of the committee, who were to report on it. But many obstacles occurred; and I moved the measure again, almost in despair, at the last vestry, where every sort of uproar and division took place on other subjects, but where this measure of humanity was carried unanimously in a meeting of probably two thousand persons. The honest democracy would listen to no suggestions of prudence, as to delay for plans — delay till peace, when the price of building would fall, &c. &c. They would have the business completed *now*, whatever else was neglected; and treated with utter contempt the suggestion that it would raise the poor-rates sixpence in the pound.

"The order of the vestry (of my wording) is mandatory, and the new churchwardens and the rectors go heartily into the business. You have no conception to what a degree misery will be lessened by this institution, which far exceeds all other charitable institutions, as I could convince you; and by putting it on the parish-

rates, we give it a solid foundation, and have no trouble with annual subscriptions for its support, the parish assuming it. Excuse all this, for I am very full of the subject."

In July, 1802, writing to his daughter at Newcastle-on-Tyne, he says, — "I am truly sorry that Dr. Clark has been out-voted, and will write to him on the subject, or perhaps to Dr. Fenwick, having something to say that may apply more or less to the circumstances at Newcastle. If the supporters of the fever wards persevere, they will ultimately succeed. I had a five years' contest here, and in the end we carried the measure unanimously.

"It is peculiarly hard on our profession to fight such battles, for it may be shown to demonstration that we are the only persons in society, whose interests can be supposed to be injured by our own success. But I beg your pardon; this is not a subject for a young lady's ear." *

* (1829.) It is understood that the Corporation of Liverpool have it in contemplation to erect a land lazaretto at the north side of Wallasey Pool in Cheshire, opposite to the town. As the popular objections to the vicinity of such an establishment are precisely the same as in the case of fever wards, and are equally devoid of foundation, it is hoped that this public-spirited body will not be deterred by prejudice from the prosecution of the undertaking. Whatever tends

In January, 1802, the freedom of the town was unanimously conferred upon Dr. Currie by the Common Council of Liverpool, in acknowledgment of "his very great attention, skill, and abilities," exerted for a long series of years as one of the physicians to the Infirmary; and the same compliment was, on similar grounds, paid at the same time to his friend and colleague Dr. Brandreth.

A few months afterwards, Liverpool was visited by sickness to an alarming extent; and the physicians of the town were requested by the Common Council to make a report on the subject, with their opinion as to the cause of this sickness, and the measures of precaution or remedies necessary to be adopted. It was the intention of that body to apply to parliament for powers to improve the town in various respects, and they were desirous of introducing any regulations which might be conducive to its greater salubrity. This report was drawn up by Dr. Currie.

The period was now arrived, when Dr. Currie might consider himself in possession of those blessings which are usually thought to

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to restrict the sphere of contagious influence must be desirable in no ordinary degree. — Ed.

render life desirable. To the full enjoyment of these, however, health, the first of blessings, was unfortunately wanting. His early illness, of which an account has been given, and which his youth had enabled him to surmount, left him still liable to a recurrence of those symptoms, to which his constitution was predisposed; and scarcely a winter passed, in which he was not visited by severe inflammatory attacks, attended by cough and difficulty of breathing, for which he found venesection the only effectual though debilitating remedy. Alluding to these in one of his letters about this time, he says — "I have a sister under my roof, dying of a consumption, — a disease by which three others of my sisters have been carried off, and to which I think it very probable I myself shall fall a victim. Many are the attacks I have parried. Certainly, I combat with some skill, and with coolness, but I expect a thrust through the lungs one day or other."

In the summer of this year (1802) he received, after an interval of fifteen years, a visit from Captain Graham Moore, who, having returned from sea in bad health, was recommended by him to proceed to Buxton; and as he was at the time in very delicate health himself, and required some relaxation from the fatiguing duties

of his profession, he accompanied Captain Moore to that place. There he passed a few days with some benefit, principally derived from the society of this friend, his attachment to whom was one of the strongest sentiments that he ever cherished, and one which, unchilled by time or distance, continued with unabated warmth to the latest hour of his existence. At Buxton he had the gratification of meeting Dr. Clark of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, with whom he had long corresponded; and their personal acquaintance, commenced at this time, was converted into mutual regard and cordial friendship.

Writing to Mrs. Greg on his return, he says—"Nothing could be more unfortunate than the weather at Buxton, — cold, wet, and windy. I stayed there four days, and could have been amused, for there was good society; but the impossibility of exercise, the want of regular intelligence from Liverpool, (for the post is singularly perverse,) and an anxiety about some valuable patients, got the better of my resolution, which was to have remained eight or ten days, and I set off on my return. I met there Dr. Clark, Mr. Bigge, Col. Barry, Archdeacon Paley, Lord Harrowby, &c.; and I really could have been much pleased and gratified, had my health and spirits permitted. But the accursed

weather! Do think of a man never having a day out of Liverpool for eight years but the four I spent at Buxton! and to have been soaked and chilled in the middle of July all the time on the top of those barren hills! The spirits of the air combined against me; the demon of vapours descended in a perpetual drizzle!

"Well! we must be content — we must be content. How often is it necessary to take this kind of contentment to our bosoms, cold and chilling though it be!

"If ever I leave Liverpool again, in search of health or pleasure, it shall be, as far as I can now decide, to go to Quarry Bank." *

A short time before his journey to Buxton he had been visited by his old friend Hector Macneill, the benevolent and well-known author of the Scottish ballad of "Will and Jean," and other deservedly popular songs; who, on leaving him, went to pass the summer at Grassmere. While there, Dr. Currie wrote to him as follows: —

"I am happy you find Grassmere so delightful. I once possessed a cast of mind that would have participated, in a high degree, your present enjoyments. But whether I now in reality possess it, I do not know, for I never enjoy that blessed vacuity that gives the impressions of

* The residence of Samuel Greg, Esq., the husband of his correspondent.

nature fair play. I have got into a state which makes me fully sensible of fatigue, while yet I find *inoccupation* intolerable; and the gleams of imagination which visit me, are faint and fleeting, except those visitings which intrude on my sleep. I wish, for the experiment's sake, I was with you for a few days at present; I should enjoy your party extremely. I hope your muse will take fire in Borrowdale or on Grassmere! Pity that such exquisite scenery should remain unsung. Let me have a song or a tale that bears its impression; and let the beauties of England receive the touches of the Scottish Muse!

"I have a long letter from Campbell — a very fine one. It accompanies a beautiful poem, in a style somewhat new, — a dialogue between Lochiel and a Highland seer, in which the chieftain is in vain urged not to join Prince Charles Edward."

Early in this year Dr. Currie had enjoyed the gratification of seeing, for the first time, the author of the "Pleasures of Hope," who was introduced to him by Mr. Stewart and Mr. Walter Scott, and who passed a fortnight under his roof. At a subsequent period, Mr. Campbell spent some time with him also; and he became intimately acquainted with this extraordinary young man, in whom he took a strong interest,

and of whose genius he felt high admiration. During the remainder of Dr. Currie's life they corresponded; and it was with extreme pleasure that he received from Mr. Campbell, some time after his visit, the MS. copy of "Hohenlinden." This was composed, as the Editor believes, in consequence of his father's having proposed the measure of "Bruce's Address to his Soldiers," in which it is written, as a model for the poet's imitation. Of the sublime imagery of this celebrated composition (Hohenlinden), Dr. Currie frequently spoke with admiration. Mr. Campbell sent some of his other poems to him from time to time; and the letter enclosing that exquisitely pathetic ballad, "Lord Ullin's Daughter," reached its intended destination on the morning that he, whom it would have so much delighted, had ceased to live!

The reports of Dr. Currie's precarious health had reached the ears of his distant friends, and, amongst others, those of Mr. Macneill, who, hearing of his journey to Buxton, wrote a letter of enquiry, fraught with the most anxious solicitude. To this Dr. Currie replied on the 29th of October, 1802, as follows: —

"Your anxiety about my health, and the whole strain of your letter, touch me extremely. I certainly made an excursion from Liverpool

about the middle of July, on account of my health, though, being unwilling to excite alarms and discussions, I disguised my motive as well as I could. I was, on the whole, benefited by this excursion, which lasted about eight days. * * * * * * * I must struggle on as well as I can, putting a good face on the matter to the world, which my general appearance enables me to do, and reserving my real thoughts in my own breast, or imparting them only to the bosom of friendship.

"I met Dr. Clark of Newcastle at Buxton, with whom I contracted a great friendship. He interested himself extremely about my health, and conveyed me in his own carriage to Manchester, on my way home. * * * * Be assured I am not low, nor at all unhappy. I have not tasted the cup of life unembittered, but certainly it has come to my lips a grateful beverage: I have a home that is very dear to me; my domestic circle even improves; I have friends that are very dear to me — friends of whom any man might be proud. I enjoy these blessings under the conditions which attach to all human enjoyments, — under an impression, indeed, that the tenure is in my case particularly uncertain; by which, however, their relish is not impaired, but improved. So much in answer to that part of

your very kind letter which respects myself, and by which I am much affected."

The renewal of hostilities with France, in 1803, after a short-lived peace, was immediately followed up by extraordinary preparations, on the part of the First Consul, for the invasion of England. Every thing announced that a serious attempt was meditated; an army was assembled on the heights of Boulogne, and the harbour was crowded with the flotilla destined to transport the troops to the English shores. Prudence and patriotism alike required the utmost efforts; and the United Kingdom was soon the busy scene of thousands of volunteers, associated in the noblest of all causes, — the defence of their native land. Never was an appeal to the moral and physical energies of a country more powerful or more successful than on this occasion; and it was at once apparent, that whenever the invasion should take place, the enemy would find bold hearts and strong arms prepared to repel it. In the month of May this year, an application was made to Dr. Currie to take the command of a volunteer corps, about to be enrolled in Liverpool; but he declined this distinguished honour, on account of his profession and his precarious health. On the 15th of August he wrote to Dr. Currie, of Richmond, as follows: —

"My son will be happy to write to you: at present, besides his usual occupations, he is busy in learning the duty of a soldier, being a grenadier in the Liverpool Fusileers, — a volunteer regiment for the defence of the town, and, in case of invasion, for service throughout the island, — commanded by my particular friend, William Earle. They serve without pay, and find their own clothing and arms. They consist mostly of gentlemen. The command of this corps was originally offered to me; and I would most willingly have accepted it, had the duties attending it been at all compatible with those of my profession.

"We are all arming here, expecting invasion, and confident of repelling it. Never was there a more serious crisis: we are now nearly shut out of the continent of Europe, and produce of every kind is accumulating on our hands. The mails for the Continent go through Sweden! The French having shut up the mouths of the Elbe and the Weser against all English ships, we have shut them up against all others!

"What the issue will be, God only knows. I think we shall have much privation and suffering, but that we shall escape without mortal injury; though I much fear the effects of this desperate contest on our public credit."

The winter of 1803 was one of unusual severity in its effects on the health of Dr. Currie, which began visibly to give way; and he determined, with the return of spring, to make an excursion from home. Early in 1804 he wrote to Captain Moore as follows: —

"Liverpool, Feb. 8. 1804.

"My dear Moore,

"The whimsicalities of human feeling are many and inexplicable. You can scarcely suppose how much I thought of you during your cruise, or how rejoiced I was in the news of your safety. And yet I have suffered many days to slip away without hailing you on your return, and without even the desire to hail you.

"I began to think you were gone: if there were any faith in dreams, you ought to have been drowned at least five times over: *twice*, the scene of your death was distinctly before me; and so lively were these representations, that, if I had confided in the illusions of sleep, the single consolation I should have had was that they were completely different from each other. Confound these sea dreams! I was one time involved in your wreck, and awoke breathless, with the sound in my ears of the waves closing over my head.

"You will suppose I have not been well. November and December, and part of January, I was constantly declining; and, by the necessary loss of large quantities of blood, I was at one time reduced to great weakness. I am now fast recruiting, and more at ease in my breathing than I have been these two years.

"Your life, during the period of your cruise, must have been stormy and joyless.

"What kind of comforts could you have in such weather on the coast of France? Was it possible for you, at any time, to withdraw yourself from your present situation, and, with a book in your hand, over a comfortable cup of tea, to fix your attention on scenes more tranquil, and subjects more pleasing? Pray answer me this. A man like you, who has this in his power, may wear out the most tedious day, in the most dreary situation; but he who must *be present* to cold, wet, darkness, and tempest, without the animation of instant danger, or the exhilaration of expected glory, for ten weeks together, must have a mind very differently constituted to mine, if it is not involved in almost intolerable gloom. I speak on supposition, and may be deceived; for the compensating powers of nature can never be appreciated, till experience has enabled us to judge of them under the circumstances supposed.

"You may just say what you think of the invasion from Brest.

* * * * * * * * *

"I am rather a happy man as the world goes, and wish to live a few years longer. The difficulties of my profession are in a great measure over. I have no concern about getting patients: my concern is to turn the attention I am able to give them to the best and fairest account. I might do more than I do, if my strength would permit.

"When all this is achieved, it seems a hard business to be called away; and yet this was my expectation a few weeks ago. At present I look to more cheerful prospects: but in sickness and in health, with my eyes on this world or on the next,

"I am ever, my dear Moore,

"Yours most affectionately,

"JAMES CURRIE."

In April he wrote to his friend and constant correspondent, Mr. Creevey, that he should absent himself for a week or two, when the weather should become fine, and thought of turning his face towards the south; that his health required some relaxation, and, if possi-

ble, some restorative; and that a journey might prove one. He said that he should not visit London. "I will keep in the air of the country, and push towards the sun," he continued; — "how far I know not, —perhaps till the sea stops me. If so, I will see General Moore. The sight of brave men ranging in order of battle against their country's foe will regale and soothe me, and infuse into my languid frame, haply, some vital power." The fineness of the season induced him, however, to alter his plan so far as to visit Scotland in the first instance; and he wrote to request Mr. Syme to meet him at Moffat, and urged his doing so by the consideration that, from the state of his health, their opportunities of meeting would not, in all probability, be many in future. With this wish Mr. Syme complied, and several days were agreeably employed in going over his property in that neighbourhood, which was under this gentleman's judicious care. At Moffat he was also joined by Mr. Macneill, and by the writer of this.

From this place, Dr. Currie, accompanied by Mr. Syme and his son, proceeded to Dumfries, where he stayed but three days, being compelled to escape from the hospitalities of his friends, to which he was quite unequal. During his

short visit to Dumfries he called to see Mrs. Burns, the widow of the poet. He requested to see the books which had belonged to Burns, and from among them selected a single volume as a memorial, being at the same time told by her that they were all at his service. It will readily be believed that he did not omit to visit the grave, which contained the remains of that departed genius. From Dumfries, after a passing glance at the scenes of his early days and the place of his birth, the sight of which caused emotions, such as are felt by the heart when these scenes are, too probably, to be viewed no more, he travelled, by slow journeys, across the kingdom to Newcastle, where he was cordially welcomed by his friend Dr. Clark. *

* In 1805, they met again for the last time at Bath, where Dr. Clark died. During his long and painful illness, Dr. Currie saw much of him; and communicated his death in a letter to their common friend Mr. Creevey in the following passage: —

" Bath, April 29. 1805.

" Poor Clark is gone at last. He died as he lived, with the most touching kindness of disposition and simplicity of manner — and with a patience, that, upon my life, puts every thing I ever saw on such an occasion to the blush. He fell asleep at last, after incalculable sufferings. I do not think that his equal in point of head and heart is left in our profession. Then the genuine modesty — the artless integrity

Leaving Newcastle, he bent his steps homeward by Sunderland (where he spent a few hours with Dr. Paley), Durham, and Harrogate; and reached Liverpool, gratified with his excursion, though not permanently improved in health by this absence of three weeks.

From the letters which he wrote during the journey, the following are selected.

To James Mason, Esq., Shrewsbury.

" Gillsland Spa, Northumberland,
" Monday, May 21. 1804.

" My dear Mason,

" I very often reproach myself when I think of my silence to you. Till a few days before I left Liverpool, my intention was to have beat up your quarters on the Severn, and to have persuaded you, if I could, to journey south with me till we had dipped our sandals in the British Channel. At that time very fine weather made its appearance, and suggested to me that I might, without imprudence, bend my course north instead of south. To this I had several temptations: I had my property in Dumfriesshire to visit, and to settle accounts with my

of the man! but it is in vain to talk. Dr. Fenwick's attentions to him during his long illness have been unwearied."

agent; I had my son to meet from Edinburgh; and various friends in the country to visit, if I found myself so disposed.

"I passed the invisible line which divides the nations on Friday the 11th, and repassed it again on Saturday the 19th. Of these nine days I passed four at Moffat, three at Dumfries, and two in travelling in the county. The two first objects answered to my wish: I found my property in tolerable order, and my woods green and flourishing; I settled with my agent, and met my son; but I found myself in no strength or spirits for paying visits, and made my escape into Northumberland to get a little quiet. The county was in commotion with all the volunteers going on permanent duty: they were chiefly assembled in Dumfries, and balls, &c. were commencing. I was not ill enough to be excused from such parties, nor well enough to engage in them; so I slipped away.

"People that I conversed with in Scotland were not satisfied with the new administration; they had expected one on a wider basis, that would unite all parties, and produce the collected strength, which the season demands. However, they will support Pitt, though with no enthusiasm; and he will, I am certain, be disappointed, if he expects to excite the sentiments in

his favour, which distinguished his first entrance on power.

"I saw at Moffat a company of volunteers collected from the neighbouring hills. They were going through their exercise in the street, all in their shepherd dress, but with excellent arms and accoutrements. I was quite surprised and pleased with the extraordinary accuracy and spirit of their movements. They put me in mind of so many Swiss, and I have no doubt were inspired with the spirit, which distinguished the better days of that oppressed nation. Seeing me examining them, the Captain, who is a very spirited young man, and a tenant of mine, made them stand at ease, and came up to talk to me on the politics of the day. I had got a letter containing the news of the King's objection to Fox, the firmness of the Grenvilles, and the re-appointment of Pitt. I read it to him with certain reserves, and observed that I was standing in a circle, all the fellows having collected round us. They were all seemingly sorry; but yet some of them said that Mr. Fox would have been proposing peace, which would have degraded us, and made us insecure; and anti-gallicism was the sentiment that swallowed up all others. The commander told me they are all at home on such subjects. They dislike

Dundas, and do not like Pitt; they thought well of Addington, and looked for no such change as has taken place.

"I am better: I shall be back in Liverpool in the course of this month, and hope to see you there. This is a wild and solitary country, but certainly very interesting. We leave Gillsland to-day, and proceed to Sir John Swinburne's, about thirty miles off; thence to Newcastle, Sunderland, York; and facing westwards, to busy, noisy, smoky, money-getting Liverpool.

"Adieu, my dear James,

"Yours ever,

"JAMES CURRIE."

Extract from a Letter to Thomas Creevey, Esq., M.P., London.

"Harrogate, Sunday, May 27. 1804.

"MY DEAR CREEVEY,

* * * * * *

* * * "I am much benefited by my journey, and three weeks of absence have turned to account.

"We spent an agreeable day at Capheaton; and at Newcastle had a most hospitable reception from Dr. Clark. There we saw Bigge, Losh, Dr. Ramsay, and Turner. We saw Paley

and the iron bridge at Sunderland, and the cathedral and Fenwick at Durham. * * * * * * We have not read the papers regularly of late. What a wild country from Longtown to Newcastle! We travelled the high military road on the Roman wall, and, except when we turned aside to get to Gillsland, the road itself was good. But during the whole line we did not encounter a post-town, and the letters we wrote at Gillsland on Sunday, we found no opportunity of forwarding till Wednesday morning, when we reached Newcastle. Had we travelled the road by Hexham, we should not have been so much without the pale of civilisation.

"At Chollerford Bridge I talked a little politics, as usual, to the landlord, but could make nothing out of him. Finding him uncommonly dull, I bethought me to ask him who represented the county in Parliament; but he tried to recollect in vain. Being amused with this, I affected to be much interested in the question, and requested he would enquire among the company in the house if any one could tell. How far his enquiries went I know not; but he came back in a little while, and said that *one of the Ords* had got in at the last election, but who the other was he could not make out. When he was

gone, we laughed heartily at this, and I dare say were overheard, for by and bye the mistress came in and gave us correct information. I durst not tell this story at Newcastle; once I began with it, but the company looked grave, so I held my tongue. For all this, I liked strong-featured, burring Northumberland. The moor-land landscape pleased me; and the green pastoral hills and dales conveyed the idea of simplicity, independence, and happiness. I take it they are a good people, and, physically speaking, like all the inhabitants of the borders, they are a fine race.

"Well—what are you doing now? What is likely to happen in Parliament? I could laugh at what *has* happened*, if it were not that I

* Alluding to Mr. Addington having been just forced to resign the situation of prime minister, by the separate yet united opposition of Mr. Pitt, Lord Grenville and his friends, and Mr. Fox and the Whigs. The conduct of the latter party on this occasion Dr. Currie considered peculiarly short-sighted and unfortunate; and the event speedily justified this opinion, previously declared to his correspondent: as Mr. Pitt immediately formed an administration, himself at its head, which excluded Mr. Fox and his friends, and which, on that account, Lord Grenville refused to join. Amongst many other passages, the following extract from a letter to Mr. Creevey, dated Sept. 2d, 1802, is selected:—"I sometimes fear, too, that Opposition will break prematurely with Addington, and perhaps beat him

could cry at it too. So I am neutralised, and only stupid when I think of it. I won't go on with the subject till I hear from you."

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At this time Dr. Currie brought out the 3d edition of the *Medical Reports;* and with the first copy, wrote the following letter: —

To Dr. Wm. Wright, F.R.S., Edinburgh.

"Liverpool, June 19. 1804.

"My dear Sir,

"Knowing you will be interested in the publication beyond any body, I transmit, by the coach of this evening, a copy, the first that is made up, of the third edition of the *Medical Reports,* in two volumes. You will see I have had frequent occasion to introduce your name, and that I conclude as I began, with you. I flatter myself that you will find nothing in what I have said to displease you; and I have no doubt you will find that what human evidence

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down, which I suspect may pave the way for the return of Pitt into office. Now, every day that he is out, he sinks; and every day that Addington is in, the general spirit of the people rises." — *Editor.*

can do, is done towards the establishment of our practice. Within these few days I have received forty cases from the House of Recovery at Cork, which came too late. It is not a little interesting and singular, to find experience so uniform on this important subject.

"I have executed this third edition under constant bad health and oppressive engagements. It is on that account far less perfect than I could wish, but it was impossible it should be otherwise. From the month of October till May, I lost by venesection two hundred ounces of blood, and took at least eleven ounces of the tincture of digitalis. I could not otherwise have lived. But my languor and oppression are not to be told. Finding some relaxation essential, I broke away from Liverpool on the 9th ult., and penetrated into Scotland as far as Moffat. I was much mortified to be so near you and my other friends in Edinburgh, without seeing you; but, at the time, I had no spirits for the meeting, and no breath for your long stairs. I kept out of all great towns, travelling about thirty miles a day, and living cool and quiet. * * * *

"I am ever, my dear Sir,

"Yours most truly,

"James Currie."

For a short while after his return from Scotland, Dr. Currie's health continued such as to give his friends the hope that it had experienced considerable improvement, — a feeling which was encouraged by the circumstance, that his general appearance did not always convey the idea of illness, even when he was far from well. The great exertions, too, which he made to bear up and to combat his complaint, contributed to excite expectations, which unfortunately were not realised.

In the month of August he was sent for by express to Manchester, in consequence of the fatal illness of Dr. Percival, who had earnestly desired to see him. He instantly answered the summons in person; and although in very delicate health at the time, made several other hurried visits on this melancholy occasion.

This was the second instance of Dr. Currie's being summoned to Manchester to the death-bed of a much valued friend and distinguished member of his own profession. In each case, his exertions were followed by an illness of the most serious nature.

The extreme hurry and agitation which had marked his journeys to see Dr. Percival, and the strong interest which he had felt where so valuable a life was concerned, combined to assail an

already enfeebled frame. He was again taken ill, and threatened with symptoms which excited the lively apprehensions of his family. Indeed, he was himself strongly impressed with the belief that, if he passed the ensuing winter in Liverpool, the consequences would, in all probability, prove fatal. The choice of a milder residence, therefore, became the subject of his frequent consideration; and, fully impressed with the necessity of coming to a decision with as little delay as possible, he wrote as follows to his friend Miss Kennedy of Manchester, on whose experience and judgment he had great reliance: —

To Miss Kennedy, Clifton.

"Liverpool, September 16. 1804.

"My dear Friend,

"I have, indeed, been much occupied with my own situation. The hurry, agitation, and deprivation of sleep consequent on my attendance upon Dr. Percival, shook me a good deal, and brought on a return of my cough and difficulty of breathing. These and other circumstances made me revolve in my mind what plan I was to adopt for the winter that is coming. I have never yet tried the air of the inland and southern parts of the kingdom, which I think

would suit me better than that of the sea-coast. If I am not able to live here, I think I ought to try it; for as to going to Madeira, or any other part beyond seas, that would cut me off from my family, I have decided that I will not attempt it.

"By great care I may, perhaps, do here; but I think of taking a little excursion southward, at any rate, before the winter sets in, partly in the hope of some benefit from the journey, and partly by way of looking out for some resting-place, in case I should find it necessary to abandon Liverpool for the winter months. I have heard of the places south of Exeter, — Sidmouth, Exmouth, &c.; but Exeter itself, or its environs, would, perhaps, be preferable, as it is less exposed to the vapour of the sea. Do you know any thing of this country?

"Some confidential friends, high in the medical profession, have, on the other hand, advised me to try a winter's residence in Bath. They tell me that the air is inland and warm; that the accommodation is easy; that good society is at hand, if I should be able to enjoy it; and that, if I found the place suit me, I might in the end exercise my profession there, with little fatigue, and probably with easy success, at least to a certain extent. If, on the

contrary, it did not suit me, that I might move quietly southwards to Exeter, or some place in its vicinity: or, if circumstances should so turn out, that I might return here in the beginning of summer.

"The idea of trying Bath pleases me. I have always thought my symptoms in part gouty, for which the waters might be useful; and the idea of my settling there finally, should my health be restored, makes the thoughts of it as a temporary residence, less a loss of time than it might otherwise be.

"You have spent a winter or two in Bath: how do you find it as to temperature? — How did the air agree with your breathing? — Do you think it would suit me, or that I should suit it, should it please God to restore me?

"Think and speak. I should go with considerable advantages as a physician, from the general good opinion of the principal physicians in London, Edinburgh, &c."

In consequence of the answer to this letter, Dr. Currie, at the close of November, 1804, accompanied by his daughter, went, by slow journeys, to Clifton, — a place which he had visited, under circumstances too similar, twenty years before. Here he was met by Miss Ken-

nedy; and, after a few days' rest, proceeded to Bath, where he remained a month. From his letters during this period, the following selection is made: —

Extract from a Letter to the Editor, dated Dec. 12. 1804.

"I was surprised this morning to learn that the Bath Agricultural Society had elected me an honorary member, on their second day's meeting. I was chosen at the same time with a Mohawk chief, a superior man, who, on the occasion of his election, delivered a speech which surprised them all for its modesty and propriety. This honour, I have no doubt, I owe to Mr. Galton*, as well as much of the other notice I have received.

"I have had invitations from every quarter, but shall refuse them universally. The only company I mean to go into is their conversation parties, of which Sir W. Watson has one every Tuesday, and Dr. Haygarth every Saturday."

* Samuel Galton, Esq. of Dudson, near Birmingham.

To William Roscoe, Esq., Liverpool.

"Bath, December 19. 1804.

"My dear Friend,

"I intended to have written you a long letter at this time, but have been prevented. However, I am unwilling not to say a word or two to you, more or less.

"On the general subject of my health I can speak satisfactorily. I was benefited by my journey, though I caught cold in the course of it. But this cold is gone off, and with it my cough has in a great measure disappeared. My difficulty of breathing is also very much gone. I have never been obliged to get out of bed in the night from that cause, since I left Liverpool. My appetite and sleep are both pretty good, and my strength is returning. What has given me most pain of late is an affection of my face, sometimes occupying the bones immediately under the eye, and sometimes shooting up to my temple. It is the effect of cold, I believe; and though troublesome, is not serious.

"This is a most gay and active scene, and the city to the eye is extremely beautiful. Excepting for a short walk twice in the pump-room, I have been nowhere in public, and my

daughter has as yet resisted all invitations to the balls, concerts, and assemblies.

"There has been a considerable number of people calling on us, and we have had more notice than could have been expected, and quite as much as has been good for me.

"There are three meetings weekly here for the purpose of conversation. I have received invitations to attend each of these, but have as yet been at one only, at Dr. Haygarth's. You go about seven, and stay till half-past nine. Tea and coffee are handed round, and you converse on whatever may occur. It is certainly an easy and agreeable mode of society; but as there is no president to keep order, and no subject fixed on beforehand, there is a want of unity, and, I should suppose, a danger of dulness. There were fifteen or sixteen persons at Haygarth's, sitting round the fire.

"Lord Lansdown is here — greatly broken in health; I have seen him twice. He asked after you as well as he could very kindly. Every body asks after you and your Leo.

"There is a literary society here which meets once a fortnight, and at which papers are read. The subject at the last meeting was the character of Machiavelli, which one of the members has endeavoured to whitewash. The subject is

adjourned to their next meeting, and I mean to attend. I wish you would tell me what I ought to say on this question, if I speak at all. Are there not parts of Machiavel's conduct, which may serve as a commentary on his book? Did not his interview with Cæsar Borgia produce horrible acts? and have not these been supposed to be sanctioned by his advice and counsel? Pray let me hear from you on these particulars, and on the general character and morals of this extraordinary man: and write as soon as you can.

"We are in good lodgings. Miss Kennedy, whom we took up at Clifton on our way, is with us. Nobody can be more attended to or better nursed than I am, the effects of which will, I hope, appear. I have not fixed when I shall see you again, but I hope it will be soon in the ensuing month. This I shall, however, be able to speak on with more certainty in ten or twelve days.

"Remember me in the kindest manner to Mrs. Roscoe and all your family. Accept yourself every good wish, and believe me, my dear friend,

"Most affectionately yours,

"JAMES CURRIE."

From a Letter to the Editor, dated 25th of December, 1804.

"We went last night to tea (I have never yet dined or supped out) to Mr. Barclay's to meet the Indian Chief. He was dressed in the costume of his country, and was very amusing. He described the Indian mode of warfare — gave us an account of their weapons, of their military order, their mode of advance, and of retreat. He gave us their war-whoop when the battle commences, and their terrific yell, which is the signal of their breaking in upon the enemy, and the war-song, which they sing in marching through the woods towards their adversaries. He gave us the Indian account of Braddock's defeat, and of various other actions; particularly of that in 1791 or 1792, when General St. Clair, with 3000 Americans, was totally defeated by 1000 Indians. In this action, as well as in several others, he himself fought; his pictures, therefore, are particularly lively. He is a clever man, and singularly interesting; very mild and gentle in his manners, but terrific, I dare say, in the day of battle. His mother was Scotch, from Fife, and he himself two years at school in Edinburgh in 1784—5, so that he understands our language and manners perfectly,

but prefers the unbounded freedom of Indian life. His name on *Earth*, Captain Norton; but with *the Gods*, Teyoninhokaráwen."——

Dr. Currie had proposed to return to Liverpool early in January, but at that time suffered a relapse, and was unfit for the journey, had he been equal to encounter Liverpool and his duties there. Not able to enjoy all the quiet at Bath which he found necessary, he went to Clifton, where he passed this and the following month, making occasional visits to Bath of a day or two at a time. This change was attended with some benefit; and his friends sometimes fancied that they saw "the traces of disease in his countenance softening into the fulness of health:" but he was subject to frequent alternations, which retarded his progress, and rendered the future very doubtful.

During his stay at Clifton, a contagious and malignant fever broke out amongst the French prisoners at Stapleton, in that neighbourhood. This was an occurrence particularly calculated to interest his professional feelings, not less than his humanity; and he paid several visits to these unfortunate men, although his health and strength were, at the time the circumstance came to his knowledge, in a very feeble state, and frequently

scarcely permitted him to leave his bed. Under the zealous superintendence of the physician to the hospital (Dr. Jeffcott), who was familiar with his name and practice in fever, he had the gratification of witnessing the salutary effects of the cold affusion in arresting or mitigating the contagion; and a few months afterwards, he published an account of this, in the last edition of the Medical Reports.*

The following passages from Dr. Currie's letters and journal will describe his situation and feelings at this time: —

From a Letter to Mr. Creevey, dated Clifton Hotwells, 12th of January, 1805.

"I use you very ill; but you must forgive me. I am often unwell, dispirited, disturbed; and, at Bath, my lucid intervals were so filled up by visitors, that really I found writing, even to you, rather a task. My friends at Bath were amazingly kind to me. If I had been able, I might have circulated every where. But I refused all dinners, suppers, and musical parties, and went

* Of 815 prisoners who were seized with this gaol fever, from three to four hundred cases were cut short by the cold affusion, at the *commencement* of the disease: from four to five hundred ran their course — and forty-one only died. *Med. Rep.* vol. ii. p. 254.

out only to a few conversation parties and *teas*. I am come to this place for purer air and quiet.

"I am infinitely obliged by what you say about London. If I had any dependance on ten or twelve years of life and *strength*, I might listen with pleasure; but I have no such dependance. Here, or at Bath, practice is easy. If I move at all, it must be to one or other of these stations: I cannot, however, speak at all, till I see whether I am to live; that, you know, is the *sine quâ non*. I am tolerably at present; but I have many fluctuations."

From his Journal of the 18*th of January.*

"Went an airing on the Downs as far as King's Weston, and drove through Lord de Clifford's park. The sun bright; the air mild; the day, for the season, beautiful; the scenery singularly so. In driving through the park of Lord de C., and its ancient trees, I felt, for the first time for a long while, somewhat of a poet's dream."

From a Letter to Mr. Syme, dated Clifton, 30*th of January,* 1805.

"At the present moment, when the future, in regard to me, is so uncertain, I am more than usually unwilling to incur expense. I have abandoned a practice of nearly 2000*l.* a year;

and though, if my health should return, I could immediately resume it — though I see plainly I could take up practice, either here or at Bath, without difficulty,—yet this question of health still remains undecided, and the keen blasts of winter "nip me shrewdly." I am not, however, worse, but rather better — at times very much so; but I fall off every now and then. I do not mean to return to Liverpool for two months to come. At the end of that period, I shall be able to peer a little into futurity, and then decide accordingly.

"It is a sad thing to be enfeebled by disease, at the very time that one requires the most determined resolution and strength of purpose. If I had health, and could play up to my reputation (God knows, much higher than my deserts), I believe I might get practice in several places: but without health, what can be done?"

To William Roscoe, Esq., Liverpool.

"No. 5, Mall, Clifton, February 7. 1805.

"My dear Friend,

"I have been much too long in acknowledging your kind letter; but to tell you the truth, I have felt a sort of reluctance to speak of myself while the state of my health continued so variable, and the result so uncertain. For a time I seemed to recover uniformly; but the excessively

severe weather in the latter end of December pinched me severely. I could not get exercise or fresh air; and without these I could not sleep. With every care, I *did* catch cold, and with my cold returned my other symptoms. At the beginning of the year, the time I had first fixed for returning to Liverpool, I was so much indisposed, and the weather so inclement, that had the measure been proper in itself, it was not in my power to have accomplished it.

"At Bath, though I went into no parties, I had many acquaintance. Unlike *our Mantua*, it is a place of no business, and forenoon calls are all the fashion. I had in my apartments a succession of visitors through the day, and felt myself often exhausted by the mere efforts of conversation. I wished for more quiet, and removed hither the 5th or 6th of January. I took a house which is in the Mall, and in fact in the country; we have very good society here, and are as much noticed as we wish. I have been occupied in preparing a fourth edition of my Medical Reports for the press, the last edition being sold off; in corresponding with official men about the fever of Gibraltar—a most melancholy subject; and in answering a few consultations, which I have not been able to avoid. On the whole, I have not been idle, nor at all

fatigued, and January has passed away more quickly than I expected. I am perhaps as well as could reasonably be looked for, but still weak, and easily rendered breathless. I long to return, but am not able to resume my professional engagements yet; and I know the anguish I should feel to lie on my couch in Hanover Street, and to hear that any of you wanted me: so I keep out of sight, and out of hearing, though it requires a strong effort of mind.

"I will write again before long; and whenever the question of health is decided (if it should be soon decided), I will speak without reserve. Now let me pass to other subjects. I went to the Bath Literary and Philosophical Society, and heard Mr. O., a lawyer, and friend of Lord Lansdown, read the second part of a paper on the character of Machiavel. It was, in fact, a panegyric, and concluded by placing him among the enlightened assertors of liberty, — by Sidney and Locke. No one disputed his conclusion, except myself. In reply to me, he chiefly relied on this argument, — that the model which he gave of his Prince was Cæsar Borgia: that Cæsar Borgia was a perfect monster; that he murdered his brother, committed incest with his sister, &c. &c.: and could Machiavel be possibly in earnest in holding *him* up

as a model? This seemed good reasoning to his hearers: and finding that to reply effectually would be to impugn many supposed facts, and to enter into discussions for which I was not fully prepared, and which no one else seemed prepared for *in the least*, I let the matter drop; merely asking him whether the contemporaries of Machiavel, and particularly the Medici, had shown any symptoms of considering his work as ironical, which he acknowledged he did not know that they had.

"The meeting was thin; and whatever the society may be when more numerous, or on other subjects, the members present were wholly unequal to the topic before them.

"O. is a good fellow, and a good Whig. I had much talk with him afterwards, particularly in regard to your Leo, about which all the world is enquiring. I asked him why ——— did not attend the discussion, not doubting that he was a member; but he told me that he was black-balled *as a democrat* in the year 1797, and that the society had originated in a very narrow set. I went no more near them, though they were abundantly civil; — but formal and stupid; and not suited to the habits of one, bred up among our fierce and unruly crew.

"There are, however, a sufficient number of

clever men resident in Bath to make a respectable society;—Sir William Watson; Townsend, the Spanish traveller; Cogan, who wrote on the Passions; Governor Pownall, who presided over Massachusetts fifty years ago; Falconer the physician, &c.;—but they do not, I find, amalgamate kindly; and though all nominally members of the society I mention, they do not give it regular attendance.

* * * * *

"Among the visitors to Bath, there were, in December, some very clever men. I had one or two evenings, at my lodgings, uncommonly good society. Earl Selkirk, just come from America, Lord Henry Petty, Sir William Watson, Malthus the economist and writer on population* (a very profound and modest pleasing man), Parry Okeden, Colonel Barry, De Barry the clergyman, Hoare the London banker, and Dr. Crawford. All this was very agreeable; but such men kept me breathless and exhausted, and contributed more than any thing to drive me from Bath.

"Here there is, as I said, very good society of a different kind, chiefly female. When at Bath, I met one morning by accident, at the Lady

* For Dr. Currie's opinion respecting the doctrines of Mr. Malthus, see his letters to the Editor in the second volume.

Douglasses', Mrs. Holroyd, sister of Lord Sheffield, and a great friend and correspondent of Gibbon. We took to each other kindly, and I found her a most friendly old lady. She came over here on a visit the very day on which I arrived, and has been extremely kind in her attentions to my daughter and myself. At breakfast at her house, I met one day Mrs. Goodenough, Addington's sister, widow of Dr. Goodenough; Johnny of Norfolk; Ogden, the traveller and interpreter of prophecies; and, had not an accident prevented, I should have met Lady Hesketh, Cowper's female friend, with whom Johnny of Norfolk was on a visit. Lady Hesketh lives here. I have not yet seen her. She lives in great retirement just now, having lately lost a sister.

"Johnny of Norfolk, *alias* the Rev. Dr. Johnson, is a creature of extraordinary simplicity. He is not unlike Dalton the lecturer. He is, I believe, a man of great kindness and worth, and even of learning. We talked much of Cowper. The truth respecting that extraordinary genius is, that he was a lunatic of the melancholy kind, with occasional lucid intervals. Johnny said that Cowper firmly believed that good and evil spirits haunted his couch every night, and that the influence of the last generally prevailed. For the last five years of his life a perpetual

gloom hung over him; he was never observed to smile. I asked Johnny whether he suspected the people about him of bad intentions, (which seems to me the Shibboleth of insanity,) and he told me that he very often did. 'For instance,' observed he, 'he said there were two Johnnies; one the real man, the other an evil spirit in his shape; and when he came out of his room in the morning, he used to look me full in the face, enquiringly, and turn off with a look of benevolence or of anguish, as he thought me a man or a devil!' He had dreadful stomach complaints, and drank immense quantities of tea. He was indulged in every thing, even in his wildest imaginations. It would have been better, if he had been regulated in all respects.

"The life and death of the philosophic Gibbon formed a singular contrast to those of this unhappy poet. Mrs. Holroyd describes him as a man of the most correct manners, and of the most equal temper, — calm and rather dignified, and conversing with all the flow of his writings. He was devoted to all the comforts of life, and liked the elegancies and even delicacies of the table, but ate and drank sparingly.

"A few days before he died, he conversed on a future state with Mrs. Holroyd, of which he spoke as one having little or no hope; but professed that neither then, nor at any time, had he

ever felt the horror which some express, of annihilation.

"I was deeply concerned to hear of the repeated illnesses in the house of our excellent friends at ———. I was scarcely less concerned to hear of the occupation of mind of —— himself. I sat down and wrote him a remonstrance of several pages; but keeping it by me a few days, as doubting its propriety, I heard in the mean time a more favourable account of him, and committed it to the flames. It is ten thousand pities that, at this time of day, he should think to convert bigotry by an appeal to the understanding, or even to the heart. How clearly do the records of our times prove that human reason is a most imperfect instrument; and the human heart, touched by self-interest, pride, or bigotry, a most callous and impenetrable thing!

"There are exceptions; but on my conscience I do not think they amount to one in a thousand, and therefore they scarcely ever direct, or even influence, public bodies of men. The sectarian spirit is, in my judgment, uniformly selfish, proud, and unfeeling; whether it be denominated Quakerism, or any of the other *isms*, by which philosophy has been abused and hooted, and even Christianity vilified and disgraced.

"Adieu, my dear friend, — believe me always, with mingled sentiments of respect and affection,

"Yours most truly,

"JAMES CURRIE."

As the period of his intended return to Liverpool approached, Dr. Currie found that he had derived so little advantage from his absence, as to make it a matter of great doubt whether he ought, in prudence, again to expose himself to a northern climate; and the necessity of giving up every other consideration to the chance of regaining health, induced him finally to determine on making Bath the place of his future residence.

The sacrifice of friends and connections endeared to him by long intimacy and mutual attachment, at a period of his life, too, when such ties are not easily, if ever, formed anew, was preceded by a severe internal struggle. He was too well convinced of the precarious tenure of that, for which he made this sacrifice; and this consideration naturally increased the sensibility with which he dwelt on all, that he was about to abandon. Yet they, whose privilege it was to be near him at this important moment, had ample opportunity of witnessing the consideration for others, and the efforts by which, with strength

impaired by disease, his feelings were controlled.

Dr. Currie took up his residence at Bath, in the beginning of March, 1805, and on doing so, resigned his situation as one of the physicians to the Liverpool Infirmary, in the following letter to the trustees of that institution: —

"*To the Trustees of the Liverpool Infirmary and Lunatic Asylum.*

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"After having filled the office of physician to your excellent institution for upwards of eighteen years, I find myself compelled by a sense of duty to resign it. It is with great reluctance I add, that I see no prospect of being soon enabled to resume the exercise of my profession in Liverpool, either private or public.

"For the last two years my health has been declining, and my increasing duties have been performed with fatigue and difficulty. On this account I have several times been obliged to withdraw temporarily from their pressure.

"At the commencement of the present winter, I determined to try the effects of a longer absence in a milder climate. I have spent the chief part of the inclement season at Clifton; but

for the last ten days have been resident here. Had this experiment succeeded to my wishes, I should now have returned to Liverpool, and to my usual occupations. Perhaps I ought not to say that my reasonable hopes have been disappointed; but my strength is not restored; and the motives which occasioned my temporary absence, compel me to prolong it, and to decide on rendering it perpetual.

"In taking leave of a place, in which I have spent twenty-four of the best years of my life, and in which all the strongest ties of affection and friendship have been formed, I feel emotions which I shall not attempt to describe.

"I am, indeed, about to relinquish the society of friends, of whose attachment I might express myself with pride, if every other feeling were not, at the present moment, absorbed in tenderness and regret.

"I must, however, notice more particularly the kindness and liberality of my much respected colleagues in the institution, over which you preside, who have voluntarily performed my share of public duty for nearly four months, and who have most liberally offered to undertake for me the attendance of my private patients during my necessary absence. To them, and to my other friends of the profession who have joined in the

offer, I owe every acknowledgment. Had my absence been temporary and short, I might have submitted to their kindness: as Providence has ordered it, I think it necessary to say, that to themselves must be made the remuneration of their services.

"Accept, Ladies and Gentlemen, my earnest wishes for the prosperity of your excellent institution, and of the other institutions of the same nature, which benevolence has reared among you.

"May your generosity and charity, as heretofore, keep pace with your increasing opulence; and may the vigour and unanimity of your liberal, high spirited, and independent community, in all your public undertakings, attract the notice and the imitation of the nation at large!

"I have the honour to be,
"Ladies and Gentlemen,
"Your obliged and faithful servant,
"JAMES CURRIE."

"Bath, March 18. 1805."

On the receipt of this letter, the following resolution was passed: —

"Liverpool Infirmary Weekly Board,
"March 28. 1805.

"Dr. Currie having, under circumstances of universal regret, resigned the office of physician to the Liverpool Infirmary, which for upwards of eighteen years he held, highly to his own credit and the advantage of the charity,

"Resolved unanimously,

"That the thanks of this Board be respectfully presented to him, for the great benefit derived by this charity, and by the Lunatic Asylum, from his skill, humanity, and zeal; and that he be requested to accept our best wishes for the perfect restoration of his health, and the enjoyment of every happiness."

The reception which Dr. Currie had hitherto experienced at Bath, was such as could not fail to gratify him. By the members of the profession in general, he had been met with courtesy and respect — by some, especially by Dr. Falconer and Dr. Haygarth, with friendly cordiality; and he had been well received — his acquaintance had been even courted — by the best society, both resident and casual, with which that city abounds. Amongst other distinguished marks of attention which were shown to him, it was proposed by the Marquis of Lansdown,

when Dr. Currie quitted Bath for Clifton, that he should occupy apartments in his Lordship's house in Sidney Place, whenever he came over to Bath,—an offer of which he occasionally availed himself. He had received great kindness from Lord Lansdown from the time of his arrival, and saw much of him, though Lord L. was then in a very declining state of health.

On settling in Bath, Dr. Currie found no diminution of that notice and attention, which might before have been the result of kindness to a transient visitor. Wherever he went, distinction attended him. He fell at once into an easy and extensive practice; and had very soon reason to believe that, if his health were only restored, he might expect any success in his profession, which it was possible for one man to attain. Aware, as he could not but have been to a certain degree, while living in Liverpool, of the estimation in which he was held by the world, as a physician and an author, he was not prepared for the celebrity which here awaited him: and it was a pleasing reflection to his friends that, if, on the one hand, he suffered much in the severing of those ties, which had endeared Liverpool to him as a residence; on the other, he would never have known in its full extent, had he remained in that town, the

honourable distinction, which was attached to his character and name.

The month of April seems to have passed with more cheering prospects than had previously appeared. His health had so far improved, that he was able to follow his practice without suffering from the exertion: his looks and spirits too were improved, and he expressed an opinion that he had made some progress. On the 9th of this month, he wrote to Mr. Roscoe as follows:—"I ought sooner to have acknowledged your most acceptable letter of the 16th ult.; but you will see that I have had serious subjects on my thoughts in the interval, and you will readily conceive that they have been accompanied by several painful and necessary exertions. You see I allude to the change which I have made in my residence; on which subject, having explained myself very fully to our friend Shepherd, I willingly excuse myself from entering again.

"I am rather better now than when I wrote to him, and the reception I meet here in my professional capacity is beyond all expectation."

On the 21st of April he wrote to the Editor:—"I am better, as you have heard; and have been walking with Sotheby the poet, in the field in front of the Crescent, where all the world

were out. I was able to walk from one end to the other twice, without being breathless. A great affair; — I have not taken such a walk for many a day."

This improvement was not maintained; and the spring passed, and summer came on, without their usual favourable effects. Dr. Currie's days were too generally marked by languor and debility, when he was not in actual suffering; his nights, by violent palpitations of the heart, breathlessness, and want of rest. The exertions, however, which he continued to make, were very remarkable, and enabled him not only to pursue his increasing practice, but occasionally to enjoy the society of his friends, where this could be done without fatigue. At no time, perhaps, had his society been more interesting or more prized; for it was but too evident to all who saw him, that it was not likely to be long within their power.

One of his intimate friends, the present Professor Smyth of Cambridge, who visited him in July, notices in a letter *, written soon after his

* This letter enclosed the MS. of that beautiful Elegy, commencing,

"Still dark with frowns return the sullen years,"

which is published in the Second Part of the English Lyrics, and which took such strong hold of Dr. Currie's feelings, and so much pleased him, that he committed it to memory;

departure, the extraordinary power over himself, which he possessed, and observes, — "During the hours I passed with you, I should never have supposed you ill, if my eyes had been shut; and this sort of triumph of mind over matter cannot but give you, in the course of your illness, an advantage which is not within the reach of the generality of mortals."

It was at this period of his life, that Dr. Currie composed the following Address to Sleep, with the exception of the first stanza, which seems to have been written differently some years before. It is the only poetical production of his riper years, and was composed under circumstances, which would impart interest to a poem possessing even slighter claims to be admired.

TO SLEEP.

COMPOSED AT INTERVALS OF DISTURBED REST.

Oh! Sleep, that o'er my ardent brain
Didst still diffuse thy opiate dew,
To soothe my cares through night's dull reign,
And vanish as the morning grew;

---

and was often heard repeating portions of it to himself, particularly the last stanza: —

Oh! when this altered world is lost in gloom,
When earth to prostrate man no hope can yield,
Beam on the soul, thou world beyond the tomb,
By reason promis'd, and by God reveal'd!

Though the smooth couch my limbs receives,
And softest down supports my head,
With thought and care my bosom heaves,
And all thy pleasing spells are fled.

Thou pow'r benignant, hither turn;
Again thy influence o'er me steal;
Bid my warm heart forget to mourn,
And my keen senses cease to feel.

Kindly thou list'st thy votary's pray'r,
Soft ruler of the midnight hour;
In slumber sink the forms of care,
And brighter visions speak thy pow'r.

Round me the notes of music swell!
See! green woods wave — bright waters gleam; —
Scenes of my youth, I know you well!
Scenes of my youth by Kirtle's stream!

Here many a long lost friend is found;
A father's, sister's forms I view; —
What angel wakes the harp's soft sound?
Ah! once loved Mary, is it you?

The landscape smiles — the air is balm —
Soft breezes round my temples play—
My bosom feels a sacred calm,
Blest presage of immortal day!

But the sky low'rs — dim wave the shades;
Deep sighs and groans assail mine ear:
A babe's loud wailings pierce the glades,—
My infant's cries I seem to hear; —

Sudden a spectre near me stands;
His eye is on me, fierce and wild —
A child is in his bony hands. —
It shrieks — Oh, Heaven! my dying child!

High heaves my breast, my pulses fail,
An icy coldness o'er me creeps;
Convulsive pangs my frame assail
And burst the leaden chains of sleep. *

And do I wake? Oh fearful night!
Sleep! thy curs'd spells deceive, ensnare —
Fly, demon, fly my aching sight,
And leave my heart to thought and care.

J. C.

Dr. Currie's intention was, to pass the hot months away from Bath; and alluding to his meditated journey, he wrote to one of his early friends, then residing at Liverpool, as follows: —

"I shall not stop till the sea rises on my view; nor then — not till I print my footstep in the sand — till I dip my sandal in the wave. Then I intend bending my course to the East, and searching for my sister and her children along the shore. In this course I shall see some interesting scenes. I hope to fall in with General Moore, and to gaze on the brave men that are devoted to the service of their country. I

* The Editor has not ventured to alter the evident inaccuracy of this termination.

expect to stand on the chalky cliffs of the South, to stretch my view across the sea, and breathe my defiance to the enemies of the human race. Ah me! I wish I could breathe a little better — a little longer; for the world and I are at present good friends, and this sublunary scene is full of interest.

"Remember me most affectionately to my dear sister. Many, many a sigh has she called up, when I have thought of her. I would have written to her often, if I could have done it without emotion; but affections of the mind act upon me in a way you would scarcely believe. I am become very tender-hearted in every sense of the word."

On the 2d of July, he wrote the following letter to Mr. Rathbone: —

To William Rathbone, Esq., Greenbank, Liverpool.

"My dear Friend,

"My silence has been insensibly prolonged, till at last you have taken an advantage I did not intend you, and spoken first.

"For your most kind and gratifying letter of the 9th of June, receive a thousand thanks. It was every way most acceptable to me. It gave me, not merely in words, but in deeds, an assur-

ance of the improvement of your health of body and mind; and displayed, once more, the exuberance of your talents, and the plenitude of your affections.

"Seriously speaking, my dear Rathbone, it is most soothing, most delightful, to me, to be so remembered by such a man; and though the feeling is not without a tinge of melancholy, it is one that *dwells* on my mind.

"I do not, however, suffer myself to enter any more into the circumstances that have separated us. The last seven months have been eventful to me, and productive of pain of various kinds. I would willingly now look forward to greater tranquillity — if, indeed, tranquillity be still to be found in this world of agitation, trouble, and care.

* * * * * * * *

"I hope Mr. Houlbrooke is pleased with Lord Selkirk's publication; I think it does his Lordship great honour in every point of view. I found it full of deep reflections, bearing on the most important points of political economy, and delivered in language simple and perspicuous. On the whole, I found it very amusing also.

* * * * * * * *

"As to my health, it is various. All that I can say is, that I do not lose ground on the

whole. I live a quiet life, except as far as relates to my profession, in which you will have heard I have been much called on: but I make my own terms, and avoid fatigue. There is some excellent society, which is enjoyed without form or expense.

"I say nothing of public affairs, which are awful enough. We hear incessant reports, and see considerable performers in the drama at times. Nothing can be more melancholy than our prospects as they appear to me. We are engaged in so hopeless a contest. We are so little able to make an impression on our enemy; and must so necessarily be worn out with our own exertions, even though a drop of blood were not spilled. Then our public spirit is so little elevated — our devotion to our country so little equal to the crisis!

"But I will not enter on the subject, for it is endless. This is not the letter I meant to have written to you, but it must pass for the present.

"Remember us most affectionately to Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe and their excellent family. I have been waiting for Leo the Tenth, which by some stupid mistake has not come with my children, as it ought to have done. I hear favourable accounts of its impression here, though there will be a nibbling about Luther and the Reformation. I will write to him very soon.

"I meditate a little tour to the southern coast, by and bye, but wait for a friend or two whom I expect to see.

"Adieu, my dear friend.

"Believe me affectionately

"And unalterably yours,

"JAMES CURRIE."

"P. S. This will be delivered to you by my servant George*, with whom I am about to part after upwards of ten years' intimacy. He is a most faithful, diligent, modest, thoughtful, long-headed man, and would be invaluable in any situation that requires such qualities. He writes very decently, knows accounts, and has read not a little. Many an hour of the night he has beguiled for me, by reading to me when sleep had fled my eyelids. I earnestly wish you could find some use for him in your office.

"J. C."

This journey was delayed, however, for two months, principally by his desire to complete the fourth edition of the Medical Reports, which had been long called for by the booksellers, and

* This respectable man has filled for sixteen years past, and still holds, a responsible situation in Liverpool, with great credit to himself, and entire satisfaction to the public. He was much indebted to the above testimony for his appointment. — *Editor.*

which contains the additional Chapter, written at this time, from which an extract has been given in the preceding pages. He had a conscious feeling that this would be his last literary exertion, and felt strongly solicitous to bring it to an end.

At length, early in August, he quitted Bath, proposing to be away a month or six weeks, and intending to coast along the South of England as far as Dover, at which place he looked forward with great interest to seeing Sir John Moore and his camp. But he was not able to proceed further than Sidmouth, where he arrived on the 11th, and was once more joined by his friend Miss Kennedy. On this day he grew much worse, and expressed his opinion to his son that he should never leave that place.

Till a week previous to his death, however, his mental powers retained all their vigour. Occupied even to the last with the desire of serving his fellow-creatures, he stated that, if time had permitted, he would have written on the treatment of the sick and dying; and observed that nothing was so dangerous as to attempt to make any person swallow (a thing not unfrequently done), in whom the power of deglutition was nearly extinct. Another of his last cautions was, never to give wine in cases of mental distress; for that " men frequently fly to

it as a temporary relief, contract the habit, lose their ideas of virtue, and are ruined." Ten days only before he died, he dictated to the writer an account of his political life and opinions, which will be found in the Appendix, and which closes with the following passage, added in his own hand-writing:—"This is intended as a defensive document, to be used if rendered requisite by any attack on my character or memory. On any thing that respects my memoirs, including the affair with Chalmers, I wish my loved and excellent friend Mr. Roscoe to be consulted. If health and engagements, or feelings, stand in the way, I shall be quite happy to suppose myself in the hands of Dr. Aikin.* — To this excellent friend my last blessing! and to theirs!

"I am sick and exhausted. I hope to close my eyes in peace with the living generation, and with hope in the expected union with the friends whom I venerate and love, beyond the grave.

"Remember me most affectionately to my friends at Lochrutton—not before, I believe, mentioned.

"Should any memoir be thought requisite of me, let it be short, and delicate to others. J. C. August 20th, 1805."†

* An account of Dr. Currie from the pen of Dr. Aikin may be found in the Monthly Magazine for October, 1805.

† See Appendix, No. 9.

It will not be expected that the writer should dwell with minuteness on the closing scene of a father's life. It may suffice briefly to say, that *in the valley of the shadow of death* (so he expressed himself) he declared that he felt neither tremors nor fears at the thoughts of futurity. The sufferings which usually precede dissolution were long and severe, but borne with characteristic firmness, with a patience which he thought and hoped would be an example to his family, and with perfect and resigned submission to the will of God. On the 31st of August he breathed his last, at the age of forty-nine years and three months.

His disease proved an enlargement of the heart, with incipient ossification of its adjoining vessels, accompanied by extraordinary wasting and adhesion of the right lung.

He left six children, four of whom survive. Of two sons since deceased, one was a midshipman in the navy, and the youngest had embraced the profession of his father, to whose name he promised to be an honour.

Dr. Currie was interred in the parish church at Sidmouth, where this epitaph from the pen of Professor Smyth commemorates his name: —

TO THE MEMORY OF

JAMES CURRIE, M.D. F.R.S.

LATE OF LIVERPOOL, AFTERWARDS OF BATH,

WHO DIED AT THIS PLACE,

AUGUST XXXI. MDCCCV.

AGED XLIX YEARS.

THE humbler virtues, which the friend endear,
The soften'd worth, which wakes affection's tear,
And all that brightens in life's social day,
Lost in the shades of Death, may pass away;
Fast comes the hour when no fond heart shall know
How loved was once the sacred dust below:
Here cease the triumphs which the grave obtains;
The man may perish, but the sage remains.
Freedom and Peace shall tell to many an age
Thy warning counsels, thy prophetic page:
Art, taught by thee, shall o'er the burning frame
The healing freshness pour, and bless thy name:
And Genius, proudly, while to Fame she turns,
Shall twine thy laurels with the wreath of BURNS. *

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* The following Epitaph was originally written by Mr. Roscoe, and sent by him to Professor Smyth for his revision.

In revising it, from the Professor's deep interest in the subject, the epitaph as it stands above was insensibly drawn up — and being returned with the original to Mr. Roscoe, from the same deep interest and from the habitual magna-

nimity of his nature, (to use Professor Smyth's own expressions,) was by him preferred and placed on the tomb of their common friend: —

Lost to thy friends, yet, CURRIE, live to Fame,
Whose glowing records boast no fairer name:
For long as Genius shall the bosom warm,
Science inform, and native Fancy charm;
Long as the temper'd stream new life shall bring
To fainting nature from its healthful spring;
Long as Remembrance, deeply wounded, turns
To share thy feelings o'er the shrine of BURNS;—
So long, with circling years, thy fame shall rise,
Loved by the good, and honour'd by the wise.

To expect that the world will receive as a faithful and impartial picture, the character and likeness of a father, traced by the hand of his son, would be unreasonable and vain; and this consideration ought, perhaps, to have deterred the writer of these pages from making the attempt. It may also be thought, that he was too young when he lost his father to be able to estimate correctly his powers of mind; yet he was old enough to observe and to judge of their effect upon others, and he had constant experience of the excellence of his heart. After the lapse of five and twenty years, his early recollections are still vivid; and assisted by these, by the contemporary notices which appeared, and by the communications of the intimate friends of his father who still survive, he ventures to present the following sketch: —

In person, Dr. Currie was tall and well formed, erect, and inclining to robust. His step was slow and measured; his air commanding and dignified, admitting of no approach to familiarity; and his whole appearance calculated to inspire respect. His features, though not regular,

were handsome, especially his finely expanded forehead, and deep-set dark blue eyes, indicative of profound reflection and quick penetration. His piercing glance few could withstand; while its benignant sweetness, and the attendant smile which played round his lips, still fewer could resist. His hair was black; his complexion fair and originally florid, until changed by illness; his countenance full of intelligence, benevolence, and sensibility, with an expression, except when lighted up in conversation, of deep and habitual thought.

A casual interview or a slight acquaintance would have given an erroneous impression of Dr. Currie. He had a certain stiffness and formality of manner, which he never altogether lost, and which made it difficult at first to feel quite at ease with him. In mixed society, he sometimes spoke little; and seldom threw off that reserve which was usual to him at such moments, and which probably arose from the constant habit of commanding himself and of observing others, or from that abstraction by which men of deep study are often distinguished; but which certainly did not result from pride or austerity, to which it was sometimes unjustly attributed. Latterly, indeed, his extreme languor, arising from

exhaustion and debility, disposed him at times to be still and silent. So entire was his self-possession, and so uniform the circumspection of his deportment, that he was rarely betrayed into an inconsiderate expression.

The cast of his mind was grave and energetic; tinged with a secret, pensive melancholy, partly, no doubt, proceeding from temperament, but possibly strengthened by the asperity of his early fate, and by the incidents of his profession, acting on a heart of great feeling. While in no respect incapacitated by this disposition from engaging in the active duties to which he was called, he was led by it to find a charm in the private circle superior to the attractions of general society, and to indulge in those intellectual pleasures which memory or imagination can bestow. He was not lavish of confidence or profession; but the few who had his confidence and regard, possessed both very unreservedly.

From nature he received an understanding of the first order, which was improved by study, enlarged by early intercourse with the world, and matured by observation and reflection. His knowledge of human nature was profound, and was evinced by his skill in the analysis of individual character. His reach of intellect was

equal to the discussion of the most abstruse and difficult subjects in metaphysics, politics, or morals, and his views were clear, comprehensive, and acute. He possessed uncommon powers of conversation, illustrating each topic with singular clearness, and with great strength and happiness of expression; and he had so much candour, was so entirely free from prejudice, and was such a master of reasoning, that it was difficult to converse with him seriously without improvement. To those with whom he was on terms of perfect intimacy, the attraction of his conversation was increased by his strong relish for humour, his quick perception of the ridiculous, and his being fully alive to the foibles of mankind. His voice was pleasing, and nicely modulated according to the feelings to which he gave utterance. When animated by strong excitement, his delivery partook of his emotions, and rivetted the attention. He was peculiarly skilled in drawing out those with whom he conversed, and setting them off to the best advantage. Quickly discovering the subject with which they were most conversant, and prompted by a curiosity insatiable in the pursuit of knowledge, to this subject he led them, always listening with patience and attention; so that strangers quitted his company, gratified with his society, and pleased

by having had the opportunity of giving information. Nor, while thus desirous of extracting knowledge from others, was Dr. Currie less willing to communicate that which he possessed. To the young he was particularly accessible in this respect, and encouraged every disposition on their part to apply to him.

But it was in the evening, when surrounded by his family, or with a few intimate friends, that his hours were most fraught with enjoyment. His mind was then unbent after the occupation of the day, and, for the time forgetting anxiety and fatigue, he would narrate the scenes of other years, or comment on passing events, or indulge in speculations on the future, with an eloquence, the effect of which was sometimes literally *fascinating*, if the writer may be pardoned for stating the impression made upon his youthful mind. The charm of his conversation on such occasions was enhanced by the playfulness of his manner, which presented a remarkable contrast to his general gravity and reserve.

To female society he was not less partial than he was acceptable. His voice and manner, when addressing women, had a respectful earnestness and softness, which could not fail to awaken and interest their sensibility: — there was an indescribable attraction in his character, when under-

stood, which their delicacy and penetration could both discern and value; while in their gentle sympathy he found relief, when under the influence of sorrow or depression. From his early counsellor and almost parent, down to that faithful friend who joined in watching over his parting hour, no one could number, out of his own domestic circle, more constant and devoted friends in that sex, on whom the happiness of man so much depends.

His spirit was lofty and independent; despising mean and interested subservience, he could not stoop to do that which his nice sense of honour did not entirely sanction. He was ambitious: for there was no obstacle, in his opinion, which the free spirit may not surmount, when buoyed up by ambition; nor any substitute, as far as success in life is concerned, for this effective principle of action. He aspired to distinction—not so much to that which attends wealth or station (of which, however, he formed a just estimate), as to the homage which is paid to character and intellectual superiority. Though he had never accumulated riches by his profession, his heart and purse were, notwithstanding, always open to the indigent or distressed; and when conferring a favour, the delicacy and feeling in his manner increased, while it sought

to lessen, the sense of obligation. To serve others he considered one of the best privileges of our nature; and he placed in the first rank those persons who, "after having had the ability to acquire a fortune, had the heart to use the power which attends it, in promoting the interest of others." As he rose in reputation, his opportunities of exerting his personal influence increased; and, in the midst of his various important avocations, he never turned aside from the frequent applications which he was subject to. Many a friend was accustomed to refer to his judgment and decision, or has requested his interference, in questions of delicacy or difficulty. Many a young man has applied to him for assistance and advice on entering upon life, and has, by his means, been placed in a situation to acquire independence. For his young countrymen, in particular, he exerted himself with the partiality characteristic of his nation.

The distinguishing feature in Dr. Currie's character may, perhaps, be said to have been an "ardent humanity,"—that love of his species, which displayed itself in exertions of benevolence, not restricted by local bounds, but embracing in their scope the happiness of the human race. To do good to others became, indeed, in one way or other, a part of his existence.

In following this principle, he acted throughout his private and political life with magnanimous disregard of consequences affecting his personal or professional interest. But, in doing this, he was rather under the impulse of sensibility than of enthusiasm; for his temperament had more of the melancholy than the sanguine. He well knew that such was not the obvious path by which he might expect to rise as a physician, or to pass tranquilly through life. His dispassionate judgment was fully aware how little, in a worldly point of view, he had to gain, how much he hazarded, by such a line of conduct; but to satisfy his own sense of duty was for him the first consideration.

It is not surprising that feelings such as Dr. Currie's were at times too powerfully excited for his own happiness. That high-toned sensibility, which has been beautifully and justly said to be "the source of all that is excellent in the productions of genius, and all that is noble in virtue, and which is alike the spring of refined taste in literature and of delicacy in sentiment*," was not unfrequently in him the cause of pain to his family and friends. They saw and lamented its

* The writer trusts that his friend Dr. Henry of Manchester will forgive this introduction of a passage from his letter.

morbid influence on occasions which, by many, would have passed unheeded, or, upon minds of less delicate texture, would have made a slight and transient impression. Yet sensibility and tenderness of disposition were closely united in his character with strength of mind, vigour of purpose, and decision of conduct; and in no respect was this combination more apparent than in his discharge of professional duties, where qualities so opposite are perpetually called forth. His constancy and fortitude, in supporting the attacks of a disease which was gradually undermining his strength, have been already recorded: but it is not for those in the enjoyment of uninterrupted health fully to appreciate the heroism of his life in this respect. He rarely uttered the language of complaint; yet one who loved him, and reveres his memory, now remembers with peculiar tenderness an expression of it, in his remark to her, — "I shall die, like the camel in the wilderness, with my burden on my back."

Dr. Currie was a great admirer of the military character. He loved many of the traits which belong to the soldier; and the splendour and perils which surround the warrior and the hero captivated his imagination: yet no man more distinctly saw in their full dimensions, or felt more strongly, all the horrors and evils attendant upon

war. He contemplated the face of nature with exquisite enjoyment, in its most peaceful, as in its sublimest forms. In his admiration of the productions of genius, especially of poetry, he was an enthusiast, and took delight in repeating the compositions which he particularly admired.* To the influence of music he was feelingly awake, chiefly preferring the plaintive and touching melodies of Scotland, which seemed most to "accord with his soul's sadness." His dramatic taste was delicate, and his criticism ingenious and original. Of these some specimens will be found in the present volumes.

In all his habits he was simple and abstemious, — as sparing in his own personal indulgence as he was an enemy to epicurism, extravagance, and effeminacy in others.

As an author, his style, on whatever subject employed, is easy, clear, and vigorous, varied and harmonious; and occasionally exhibiting passages, perhaps not exceeded in beauty and

* Amongst these, were Smollett's Ode to Independence; Gray's Elegy; the Vision of Mirza; Mrs. Barbauld's Hymns; some of the songs of Burns ("Their Groves of Green Myrtle," "The Chevalier's Lament," "To Mary in Heaven," and "Bruce's Address to his Soldiers") and some of the early poems of Scott and Campbell. At the age of twenty-four, Shenstone appears, by a letter from one of his friends, to have been a favourite with him.

pathos by any English author. His writings and letters abound in poetical imagery and figurative expressions, showing the turn of his mind to have been essentially poetical; and it is not impossible that the habit of committing his thoughts to verse was alone required, to have made him excel as a poet.

Viewing him too as an author, we cannot help being struck by the singularity of his having acquired, under the disadvantage of an education interrupted at so early a period, such correctness in composition, that little or no difference is observable between his first productions, and those which issued from his pen when he was mature in years. The Dialogue on Melancholy, and the Memoir of Dr. Bell (the first written at the age of twenty-five, the last at twenty-eight), appear as finished compositions as his Life of Burns. His letters also, both when writing to his most intimate friends the unstudied effusions of the moment, and when addressing his general correspondents, are written with as much accuracy as if intended for the press; seldom containing an erasure, or alteration, beyond the substitution of one word for another, to avoid repetition. This, no doubt, proceeded from the practice which he had in early life adopted, of committing his ideas to

paper, revising and correcting what he wrote; by which he acquired clearness in arrangement, and accuracy in expression.

An uncommon power of abstraction gave Dr. Currie a great advantage in getting through his literary engagements. The extent to which he possessed this faculty was often matter of remark amongst his friends. Perpetually obliged, by the calls of his profession, to break off when in the act of composition, he could, on again entering his study, dismiss external ideas from his mind without an effort, and at once resume the subject on which he had been engaged. By this rigid dominion over his thoughts, no time was ever lost; and to his economy of time it was owing, that he was able, in the midst of active duties, and under interruption from frequent illness, to compose his different works, and to carry on an extensive correspondence. His principal time of composing was from two to three in the afternoon,—an hour at which he was in the habit of taking coffee; and when no other time was to be found, he encroached upon the night.

Of Dr. Currie's reputation as a physician, it is not necessary to speak. His conduct in the exercise of his profession was, with regard to his patients, feeling, liberal, and generous; towards his

medical brethren, it was distinguished by delicacy and candour. He was decided, without arrogance, in delivering his opinion, which he maintained with firmness, but with temper. Where he differed from his colleagues, it was always with respect; and being free from every jealous feeling, he was equally ready to adopt their view, when convinced of its correctness.* The

* In support of what is here asserted respecting his professional conduct towards his colleagues, the editor refers to the following extract from an obituary notice of Dr. Currie, written by an eminent physician, the late Dr. Falconer of Bath, and inserted, with his name, in the *Bath Chronicle* of Sept. 5. 1805. "His judgment was not clouded by jealousy, or his view of the subject or case in question obscured by partiality or darkened by prejudice. Equally ready to adopt the suggestions of others, as he was those of his own judgment, he never deviated from the point aimed at, because the whole of the path was not traced out by himself. Superior to such considerations, which never prevail in exalted minds, he rested his character on higher grounds; and the discerning part of mankind soon became sensible that such acquiescence, when it met his own unprejudiced ideas, was an honour to his character. * * * * * * Original, however, in his ideas, he was better suited to point out the way, than to follow the speculations of others; and what he advised gained a kind of involuntary preference, which nothing but a consciousness of merit in the adviser could have secured. His counsels, though destitute of the recommendation of peremptory assertion or lavish display of pretended success, which sometimes overpower when they do not convince, carried with them the more powerful charms of sense, judgment, reflection, and acquaintance

calmness of his accent, the composure of his look, and an evident sympathy with their feelings, the sincerity of which was not to be mistaken, at once gained the confidence, and frequently the affection, of his patients. He was guarded in his manner and expressions, and neither raised false hopes nor unnecessary alarm. His professional reserve, when spoken to respecting the situation of those under his care, was greatly to be admired. His own case was the subject of his constant observation and experiment, pursued with a calm sagacity, that might have been more naturally looked for, had another been the object of his attention. His knowledge of his complaint was accurate; the opinion which he had expressed when living, having been fully confirmed by examination after death. To mitigate the inordinate action of the heart was his aim in all the remedies to which he had recourse; and to the adoption of which, persevered in sometimes against the remonstrance of his friends, he believed the prolongation of his life for many years to be chiefly owing. He en-

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with the subject, and were accompanied with the most amiable and satisfactory manner of manifesting these admirable qualifications to the understanding of those with whom he conversed."

tertained the conviction that disease in this organ would prove fatal to him; and some years previous to his death, expressed this opinion to a friend, who noticed him breathless from palpitation, and whose hand he placed upon his heart; adding his wish, however, that what he said might not be repeated to his family, whom it would unavailingly distress.

It appears * that had his life been spared, he would probably have written upon gout and on insanity — diseases to the investigation of which he was peculiarly fitted by his philosophical spirit of enquiry and his accuracy of observation. To accomplish what he did, under the constant impression (which, in the case of a physician, must acquire increasing weight with every hour) of the extreme uncertainty of his life, was in itself a sustained exertion of moral energy, which deserves our highest admiration.

Such are the views that I have been led to entertain of the character of my loved and honoured father, from what I have been able to

* Letter to Dr. Wright, dated 24th Aug. 1800: — "I have something also to say on the gout, and on insanity and hydrophobia; — but the last subject may be discussed in some periodical work; the two former will require a separate publication. When I have done all this, I will rest; I shall have performed my part."

observe myself, or could understand from others; and I trust that I shall not be thought to have expressed more than a perusal of his life and writings will confirm.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX, No. I. Page 70.

DIALOGUE ON MELANCHOLY.

Written in 1781.

HISTORY OF PHILOCLES.

There are certain moments, perhaps, in the life of every individual, when the world appears divested of all its allurements; and the business and pleasures of the present scene convey to the mind nothing but weariness and disgust. Under the influence of such feelings the conduct of men is various. Some attempt to banish reflection by engaging in scenes of riot and festivity; while others indulge their gloomy ideas in solitude and silence, till they become utterly unfit for every manly exertion. But those in whom tenderness of heart is accompanied by steady judgment, follow a different plan. They retire within themselves, — they examine the nature and the source of the melancholy with which they are seized, — they banish every idea which may have originated from feebleness of spirit; and the sorrow which has arisen from the real ills of life they counteract by turning their eyes on its blessings. By degrees, this melancholy assumes a more enlightened and tender form; the sunshine of the soul returns, and they mingle again in the business of the world, prepared to receive their evils with resignation, their blessings with gratitude. I was making these reflections to Philocles one evening last autumn, when I was on a visit to him at his country seat in Aberdeenshire. He heard me with attention; and when I had done, turning round to me with particular earnestness of manner and animation of countenance, he began to reply.

"However just, my good friend, your speculations on this subject may in general be, yet you must forgive me for believing, that there are many occasions in real life, on which the most virtuous and best regulated minds will find it impossible to banish the suggestions of melancholy by such an effort of reason as you have described. Grief may in general be overcome, because the reflections which accompany this passion are allied to pain; and from what is painful, the mind is willingly diverted. But while the cause of melancholy is such as excites emotions of tenderness as well as of sorrow, the imagination delights to dwell in the house of mourning; and the votaries of woe experience, in the bursting heart and streaming eyes, a luxury of enjoyment, in comparison with which the pleasures of mirth dwindle into nothing. To counteract a cause which is so constantly operating on the imagination, will in general be a task too difficult for the reason to perform: we can summon up great powers of resolution, when the exertion is to be made only for a moment; but the vigour of the mind yields to an attack, which, though not powerful, is constant. If then it be necessary, in any case, to counteract the influence of melancholy, it were, perhaps, better to attempt this by presenting to the mind a constant succession of impressions, which may have some affinity with the melancholy that has engaged it; but which, at the same time, by warming the imagination, or by affecting the heart, may divert the attention from brooding over the individual ideas on which it had been accustomed to dwell. The human mind rejects violent transitions, and they should not be attempted: but when the fancy is by degrees more and more interested, sorrow assumes a less joyless form, and the transition to tranquillity and cheerfulness becomes easy and natural. The face of nature, in its rude and uncultivated state, seems well adapted to inspire emotions of the tender melancholy kind; and as the landscape exhibits more the appearance of industry and art, the impressions which it gives are more lively and cheerful. The powers of music to melt the heart have been generally felt and universally cele-

brated: and the society of amiable and virtuous women will best interest the affections, and gradually recall us to the business of life." — Here my friend stopped. I found he had considered the subject deeply. I saw, from his manner, that he spoke from experience; and I guessed, from the steadiness of his eye, and the animation of his countenance, that his mind laboured with something that had not yet been expressed. "And so," said I, "Philocles, I find you are of opinion that sorrow, or rather melancholy, is seldom banished merely by an effort of reason." "Time," said Philocles, "is the sovereign remedy for every kind of grief: that sorrow which is unmixed, will soon expire: that which is mingled with affection and tenderness, will assume the form of melancholy: in the first case, the efforts of reason will generally be needless; in the second, they will be without effect."

"But pray," said I, "Philocles, do not you think that this disposition to melancholy ought, in every case, to be discouraged by such means as are in our power?" "Such at least," said he, "are the maxims of the world; but I cannot admit this opinion without many exceptions. Ambition and avarice are the ruling passions of our age; and it is too much the fashion to ridicule every thing that does not lead to power or opulence. If these are to be the chief objects of our pursuits, certainly melancholy, and indeed every softer affection of the mind, ought to be stifled. But if the real business of life is to procure happiness, and to ensure it through future stages of existence, this might surely bear a dispute. In this view (said he), melancholy should either be encouraged or combated, according to the disposition in which it appears. If a person's melancholy is founded on an excess of sensibility, which leads him to magnify trifles into misfortunes, and to shrink from the ills that are inseparable from humanity, certainly this amiable quality has degenerated into a weakness of the most dangerous nature; and here, of course, it ought to be suppressed: but where firmness of spirit and steadiness of judgment are united to tenderness of heart and delicacy of feeling, the melancholy which depends on these qualities

will form the best ornament and support of virtue; and though it may incapacitate the possessor to shine in the circles of the great or the gay, it will give him an internal source of enjoyment which cannot be done away, and enable him to diffuse a charm over the scenes of domestic happiness. He may be denied the admiration of the giddy and dissolute; but he will have from the virtuous, respect without envy, and affection without flattery."

The elevated tone of voice in which Philocles made these last observations, showed me that he had formed a decisive opinion on the subject; and I determined to defer my objections to some future opportunity.

During the course of the day, I saw that his thoughts were deeply engaged; and in the evening, he requested me to take a walk towards the neighbouring hills. My friend's character deserves a few remarks. Philocles was at this time past the meridian of life, but still retained that warmth of heart and strength of imagination which distinguished him in his early days. He had known the world without contamination: he saw, or thought he saw, that he was not fit for its bustling scenes, and early retired to his paternal estate, and to the enjoyment of peace and happiness. His temper was warm and generous almost to a fault; and he possessed that independence of spirit which is humble with the humble, but looks down with indignation and contempt on vice or folly, however united with wealth or power. His taste was highly cultivated, and he had an ardour for freedom which would have done honour to a citizen of Athens, when Athens was in its glory. Philocles was held in universal respect. It is true, the neighbouring fox-hunters, with whom he did not associate, affected to treat his manner of life with ridicule; but this was only in his absence, and over their cups. When he appeared, folly and licentiousness were equally abashed. It was, indeed, easy to discover that he was a man of excellent abilities; and the goodness of his heart was conspicuous both in his sentiments and actions. In the chosen circle of his friends he was cheerful and animated, and there

he was loved almost to enthusiasm; but in large and mixed societies he appeared with a reserved, and often with a melancholy air, the source of which was generally misunderstood. Though an old bachelor, he had acquired few of the peculiarities of that character; and he was, in particular, free from that stiffness of ceremonial and vexatious attention to trifles, which makes such havoc in the happiness of life.

While we walked along the bank of the valley that extended from his house to the foot of the mountains, my friend observed a profound silence, which I did not attempt to interrupt. As we ascended the hill of Inchfallen, the shades of evening began to fall; but the weather being warm and serene, I made no remonstrances, but silently followed his steps. When we had got about half way up the hill, Philocles took a path which slanted towards the right; and which, after a few windings, led us into a copse of brushwood that grew in a little valley, formed in the side of the mountain. To the top of this valley we ascended, where we found a seat formed in a very artless manner of twigs of osier, and sheltered by a spreading oak. "This," said Philocles, "is my favourite spot, where I enjoy my meditations unmolested."

Being fatigued with the ascent of the hill, we seated ourselves without ceremony, and insensibly began to contemplate the prospect that opened before us. The light of the sun was now gone; but the moon, which rose on the eastern horizon with unsullied majesty, supplied the deficiency of his beams. As we cast our eyes to the foot of the mountain, the river Don appeared, washing its base; and then suddenly leaving it, and running through the beautiful valley of Clotha, whence, after innumerable windings, it issued into the sea at the distance of several miles. South of this valley appeared the spires of Aberdeen; and to the north, the ruins of the castle of Lora, projecting into the main. The intermediate space was filled by country seats, groves of trees, and bodies of water; and the prospect was terminated by the German Ocean, illuminated by the beams of the moon, now lifting her head above the waves. Every object appeared

with softened lustre; and the dimness of the landscape, by leaving something to the imagination to fill up, gave beauty and solemnity to the whole. The sky was unclouded and serene; and the silence was only interrupted by the sound of the dashing waters from the valley below.

"The subject of our conversation to-day," at length began Philocles, "has, at different times, employed much of my attention. I am myself, perhaps, a melancholy man; and therefore it may be natural that I should look out for some justification of the character. Whether the sentiments I have delivered be just or not, I shall not determine. You will judge. Certain it is, that nothing was farther from my intention, than in any degree to defend gloominess or moroseness of disposition. These are generally the attendants of a selfish or an insensible heart, and ought to be distinguished from that disposition to mourning, which, as I before remarked, is to be found in the most tender hearts, and accompanied with the most delicate taste and lively imagination. But I would leave the question respecting the propriety of extinguishing melancholy in him, who is to make his way in life by studying the tempers and humouring the foibles of his fellow creatures, to such as have experience in practices of this kind. I have long discovered that wealth or power, acquired by such means, has no charms for me, and have limited my desires to that happiness which can be purchased without the sacrifice of truth or of honour." — Here my friend made another pause, which I did not attempt to interrupt, for his thoughts had taken an interesting turn: I wished to learn the undisguised sentiments of his heart, and I did not dare to alarm his delicacy by the appearance of too eager a curiosity.

At length, after several deep sighs, he resumed the discourse. "If there be a peculiarity in my sentiments on this subject, you may ascribe it to natural disposition, strengthened by the habits in which I have indulged. There are, indeed, circumstances in the history of my life that may have had considerable influence in producing the present cast

of my mind, with which the world, and even you, my friend, are unacquainted.

"Near the spire of yonder church, which appears white through the tuft of trees on the banks of the Don, lies the dust of Ophelia. Thirty summers are now past since the beauteous maid, early mature in piety and virtue, was advanced from this to a better state of existence. The grief which I felt on her loss was deep and silent. The gaieties of youth lost their power to please; I courted solitude, and delighted to water her grave with my tears. You have heard that while I was yet a child, I was deprived of the counsel and instruction of the best of parents. As I grew up, I found myself in the midst of strangers, to whose taste and temper my mind had no alliance. I had feelings which they could neither indulge nor understand; my affections were not called forth. I had formed ideas of loveliness and perfection which had no resemblance to any thing around me: — I had aspirations after happiness, in which there was no prospect of my ever being gratified. In this forlorn situation, I became acquainted with Ophelia. I was then a boy of sixteen; she had just completed her nineteenth year, and was a perfect model of female loveliness. Ophelia was my relation, and she became my friend. At the first glance, I discovered, or thought I discovered, in her, the original of that image which had been so often pictured in my imagination. She had that dimpling play of features, which denotes a mind of exquisite sensibility; her complexion was fair and blooming, her eyes were full of tenderness, her manner was lively and affectionate, and in her whole appearance there was a bewitching softness, which cannot be described. Ophelia saw that I desired to please her, and she smiled on my attempts. I was proud of her favour, and strove to deserve it: my affections were engaged, and my heart dilated. Yet I never conversed with her on equal terms, nor considered her in any other light than in that of a superior being, whose goodness was entitled to all my gratitude; for I was yet a boy, full of diffidence; and Ophelia had, for several years, appeared as a woman, and

had been universally admired in the circles of the gay. On her part, she treated me with the utmost kindness and confidence, and undertook to assist in forming my manners, and in cultivating my taste. We often read together; and sometimes I was permitted to attend her in her evening walks. With what rapture did I listen to my charming instructress! Virtue acquired from her new charms: her sentiments bespoke the warmest benevolence, the tenderest heart, and most brilliant imagination. When she talked of friendship, her countenance beamed with light: when the discourse turned on love, her features laboured under an expression to which they were unequal: her eyes melted with softness, her voice was tremulous and exquisitely melodious. —Forgive me, my dear friend, for the warmth of this eulogium: thirty years are now passed since Ophelia sank into the grave; but her image is imprinted on my heart beyond the power of time to obliterate. She was, at the date of which we were speaking, in the full bloom of youth and beauty, and surrounded by a crowd of admirers. She seemed, at times, to have little relish for scenes of gaiety. There was often a pensiveness in her manner, and something of what is called romance in her sentiments, which were ill adapted to the bustle of public scenes: she loved retirement, and was enamoured of the beauties of nature. This was a cast of mind congenial to my own. I had enjoyed my intimacy with this charming maid for nearly a year, when I was sent to the University of G———. I applied to study, as you will remember, with ardour, and my proficiency was considerable. I was inspired by emulation, by the love of praise, and by an insatiable thirst after knowledge. To this period of my life I owe all my acquirements in science; and what I esteem of greater value, I owe the acquirement of your friendship, which has proved to me a source of lasting happiness. During the absence of two complete years from A——shire, I heard little of Ophelia. I was told, indeed, that she had attracted universal admiration during the winter season in E——, and heard a confused rumour of her being on the point of marriage with an officer in the royal regiment

of foot, of great merit and accomplishments. Without knowing why, I was much affected by this intelligence; but the report died away, and I soon considered it as an idle story. During the summer vacation of the year 1742, I was again permitted to revisit Ab——. The thoughts of returning to the scene of my infant pleasures, and above all, of seeing Ophelia, filled me with a happiness inexpressible. I arrived at N—— about sunset, on a summer's evening. The family received me with the utmost kindness. I enquired for Ophelia, and was directed to an upper parlour: I found her sitting alone on a sofa in the back part of the room. She rose from her seat hastily, but with difficulty: she advanced a few steps to meet me; and as she received my caresses, the tears flowed from her eyes. 'I thank God,' said she, 'my dear Philocles, that I again have the pleasure of seeing you. I began to despair of ever being so happy.' The tone of voice in which she spoke struck me to the soul: I started back — I cast my eyes over her faded form — I burst into tears. The bloom of health had forsaken her cheek, the lustre of her eyes had fled, — she was pale and emaciated: but her countenance still retained the same enchanting sweetness for which it had always been distinguished. I soon found that Ophelia was far gone in consumption, and that her physicians had, at her earnest desire, informed her of her danger. This intelligence she received with surprising calmness. Her manner in company had even become more cheerful; but she devoted much time to her private meditations, which she had earnestly requested no one might attempt to interrupt. In these solitary hours, Ophelia held converse with the Father of her being, and prepared herself for the awful change that was fast approaching. Her friends and relations beheld the youthful saint with affection and with admiration; and looked forward, with the tenderest anxiety, to that event which must dissolve all her earthly ties.

" One evening about the middle of August, as I returned from a solitary walk, I received a message from her, desiring to see me alone. I found her sitting at her harpsichord.

She was playing one of those wild, plaintive Scottish airs, which are so exquisitely affecting. She touched the keys with a gentle hand, but with infinite skill; and the sound of her voice, tremulous and feeble, but enchantingly sweet, was just to be heard in the stops of the music. I listened for some time unperceived; but at last she observed me, and desiring me to seat myself on the sofa beside her, addressed me nearly in the following words:—'I have long wished to have some conversation with you on a most interesting subject. I have observed your anxiety for me, my dear Philocles, though it has not been expressed in words; and your regard and affection are entitled to my utmost confidence and gratitude. A few days, perhaps a few hours, will place me beyond the reach of your friendship; and while I have yet power, I would wish to make you sensible how much I am touched by your goodness. Though I have not lived long, I am content to die. I recognise the hand of Heaven in the disposal of my fate, and submit to its will with resignation, and even with joy. Alas, my friend, I have little merit in this submission; a secret grief has long preyed on my mind, and turned my thoughts from this life to that world, *where the tear shall be for ever wiped from the eye.* You have seen me in the possession of many blessings, but my sorrows have been secret; yet, my dear friend, they have not been the less severe. I have struggled with feelings which I could not conquer, but I have attained resignation to that decree of Heaven, by which my earthly happiness was for ever destroyed; and, thanks be to God, my afflictions will soon be over! I have had many failings and imperfections; but my tears, I hope, have made some expiation, and I shall soon enter into that state *where the weary shall have rest.*

"'I intended to have laid my heart open before you,—to have exposed all its frailties and all its sorrows; but I have delayed so long, that I found my feeble frame would be unable to support the emotions which such a task must produce. I have, therefore, in this paper, attempted to unfold

my simple but melancholy story. It will be delivered to you when I am no more, and it will be the memorial of a friendship which the near prospect of death could not extinguish, and which may be prolonged and cherished beyond the grave.' Ophelia here paused; her countenance bespoke an elevation of mind, mixed with tenderness, that gave it an expression that was more than earthly. She continued a few minutes silent; and then rising from her seat, she beckoned on me to support her to the door, and smiling on me with inexpressible sweetness, she retired into her closet to meditation and prayer.

"This was the last time I ever saw her. The next morning she was so weak as to be unable to leave her bed; her strength gradually sank, but she preserved her senses to the last, and at the end of the third day, with the utmost serenity, resigned her spirit into the hands of her Maker. To describe to you my feelings on this occasion would be impossible — my very heart was melted within me; but I made no loud lamentations: there was a sacredness in my grief that shunned public notice, and I delighted to shed the secret tear.

"The paper which she had mentioned was found in her writing-desk, sealed, and directed for me. It explained the state of her mind, and but too well justified my melancholy conjectures. At some future time, my valued friend, you shall see this sacred record, and weep with me over the hapless story which it unfolds.

"The impression made on my mind by the death of Ophelia was lasting as it was deep. I was naturally pensive, and I became serious. I shunned large societies, and found no pleasures equal to those of lonely contemplation. When I was obliged to leave the walls of a college to mingle in the world, I found myself, at first, utterly unfit for general intercourse. By degrees my mind accommodated itself to its situation, and I became familiarised to the active scenes of public life. But the impression made on my heart was never wholly eradicated; and even in the midst of the tumult of

the camp, I have at times stolen into solitude, and indulged in the secret pleasure which such recollections as the present never failed to bestow. Nor must you suppose that this indulgence was enfeebling — I returned to the duty of a soldier with a tone of mind, not weakened, but invigorated,— with an elevation of spirit that has carried me through difficulty and danger, and strung my nerves amidst the tumults of battle. And now, when I consider the business of life as over, I delight to commune with my own mind; I delight to recall the memory of those early pleasures which have long passed away, and of those dear and virtuous connections which the hand of death has dissolved.

"By such employments, if I mistake not, the mind is raised above those sordid and selfish attachments that pinion the spirit to the earth, and the heart is prepared to dilate itself with love to man, and with gratitude and adoration to God. The solemn hour of death is at no great distance, and who would not wish to fit himself for its approach, by strengthening his aspirations after immortality?"

Here Philocles ceased. — The subject did not admit of argument, and I made no reply.

APPENDIX, No. II. Page 71.

ESSAY ON HYPOCHONDRIASIS;

Read before the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, in 1781.

(Composed at the University of Edinburgh in 1779.)

Pain and sorrow are inseparable from human nature, and frequently arise from causes over which we have no influence. The blessings we enjoy cannot be secured; our evils are often neither to be averted nor foreseen; beyond a few years our lives cannot be prolonged, and they may be cut short of their natural period by the various dangers which

surround us. But while we acknowledge that human life is exposed to a variety of external evils, it is not difficult to discern that our real happiness or misery arises chiefly from within. This truth, so often repeated, is not, perhaps, sufficiently impressed on our minds, and yet none is more evident or more important. In speaking on this subject, philosophers and divines have, in general, recommended the practice of virtue as the chief, and almost the only, requisite to happiness. It must be the wish of every good man to find this opinion just; but an actual survey of human life will oblige us to confess, that happiness is not by any means proportioned to virtue, — that virtue alone will not ensure it. Still it is true that external circumstances have, comparatively speaking, little influence upon it. In judging of the degree of happiness in different situations of life, we employ a false estimate: we consider every thing as relative to our *own* situation: those blessings which some possess, of which we are deprived, we conceive to be the fountain of *permanent* happiness; and the hardships which others have to encounter, from which we are exempted, we consider as the source of lasting pain. But it is only in the quick transition from prosperity to adversity, or from adversity to prosperity, that our happiness is greatly affected. The mind insensibly accommodates itself to its present situation; repeated impressions deaden its sensations, and the anguish of woe is as fleeting as the rapture of joy. If happiness have little connection with external things, and if it be not derived from virtue alone, on what other circumstances is it dependant? — On the nature and force of the passions and affections, and on the vigour and soundness of the imagination. The influence of the passions and affections on our happiness is obvious to every eye, but the influence of the imagination has not been generally acknowledged, nor perhaps understood in its full extent. It would not, however, be difficult to show, that the diversity of character observable in men, is in a very considerable degree to be attributed to the different laws by which their ideas are associated; and that, in parti-

cular, to this cause is *chiefly* to be ascribed that diversity of taste, by which the same object affects some minds with sensations of pain, and others with emotions of pleasure. There is hardly a circumstance of distress or sorrow that a certain cast of imagination cannot convert into a source of happiness. There are men whose pleasure it is to encounter hardships and surmount difficulties, and to look to future ages for the reward of their toils. There are men to whom the sublimity of danger robs it of terror; who delight to overhang the rocky precipice, to ride the foaming ocean, or to mingle in the shock of battle. There are men who find happiness in seclusion from society, who delight in the haunts of solitude and contemplation, the gloomy grove, the lonely rill, and the sequestered valley. There are men to whom the pensiveness of melancholy is congenial, who tread with a secret but chastened pleasure through the mansions of the dead, whence, borne on the wings of fancy, they transport themselves to brighter regions, and anticipate the joys of a world to come.

But while particular casts of imagination can convert objects of distress and terror into sources of happiness, it is equally apparent that, under certain circumstances, this faculty of the intellect has power to give additional weight to the real ills of life, and to poison all its blessings. In the following pages it is proposed to make some observations on a disease of the imagination, under whose influence the social ties are loosened, the fruits of genius are blasted, an universal gloom overspreads the mind, and reason is utterly perverted. This consummation of human misery affords ample room for the enquiry of philosophers; and though the laws of the society which I address do not admit of my entering into the subject in its full extent, I hope to present them with some remarks by which their attention may, not unprofitably, be directed to a view of human nature, in circumstances of distress, equally severe and affecting.

Under the general name of Hypochondriasis, physicians have treated of a variety of complaints in which the disorder

of the intellect has generally been considered as depending on bodily disorder, and the seat of the disease has been placed in the stomach and bowels, in the liver, in the circulating fluids, or in the mechanical derangement of the nerves. That the mind sympathises in complaints originating in the body is certain, but the reverse of this is equally true: and in directing the method of cure, it is of the utmost consequence to ascertain the source of the disorder. That most of those complaints denominated hypochondriacal, originate in the mind, appears to me extremely probable; that many of them do, is, I think, an undoubted fact; the bodily symptoms are, in general, to be explained on the supposition that the mind has been primarily affected; and those practices which experience has shown to be most efficacious in promoting a cure, seem almost entirely to produce their effects by their influence on the intellectual organs. But whatever be the general case in such complaints, that the mind is primarily affected in this species of hypochondriasis which I am about to describe, will, I doubt not, be universally admitted. In speaking of the disorder of the mind, I do not mean to refer immediately to that immaterial, incorruptible essence, the emanation of the Deity, which is the cause of thought. This, we hope and believe, triumphs equally over death and disease. I express only the disorder of its operations, occasioned (it may be presumed) by the derangement of that instrument by which it acts. This instrument is the brain, the seat of perception; and that this is primarily affected the following symptoms will, I think, clearly evince. It may be necessary to premise the general method to be pursued in treating this subject:

1. A history of the disease will first be given, enumerating the symptoms which actually appear,

In the functions of the mind, and

In the corporeal actions.

2. Some account will be given of the causes of this disease; of the

Predisponent, Occasional, and Proximate.

In other words, it will be attempted to show what constitution of mind is most disposed to hypochondriasis; what external causes promote it, and what change in the animal machine gives immediate rise to the symptoms described.

3. Some of the most remarkable symptoms will be considered; and

4. Some remarks will be made on the manner in which the disease is to be cured.

In the following history of the disease, a case strongly marked is selected; and for the sake of precision in language, I use the singular number.

The patient is first seized with a disinclination to exercise, attended with a certain languor and uneasiness of mind. Gay or cheerful objects afford him no pleasure; he shuns society, and courts silence, solitude, and darkness. His mind fixes on ideas of a melancholy nature, and an universal gloom affects his spirits, which he has neither the inclination nor the ability to dissipate. In this state his attention is particularly directed to the disorders of the body. He considers the various diseases and dangers to which life is exposed, and the reflection strikes him with terror. Not a fibre vibrates irregularly but he marks it with the utmost acuteness, and frequently exaggerates natural appearances into symptoms of some dangerous disease. This unhappy state of mind gradually increases; the patient becomes more and more anxious. He sometimes fixes on a particular disease as that under which he labours, and sometimes his frightened imagination wanders from one malady to another, as each in its turn may appear to surpass the others in danger. Notions of disease utterly extravagant have been adopted by hypochondriacs, and maintained with all the obstinacy of conviction. It is in vain that you attempt to argue with a patient affected with this disorder: his reason is perverted. What appears to you entirely ridiculous he considers as self-evident, and your unbelief is ascribed to want of judgment or of humanity. But if you once openly ridicule him, or make light of his distresses, he considers you as guilty of the most wanton

cruelty, and refuses ever after to listen to any reasoning or any consolation you may offer.

The brighter powers of fancy, the warmer emotions of the soul, are unknown to the cold heart of the hypochondriac; the taste for beauty is nearly extinguished. To him the face of nature appears joyless and barren. Even his memory and recollection, except in regard to gloomy objects, are greatly impaired; and he has no power of fixing his attention on any subject unconnected with his complaints. Though incapable of sharing the sweets of social intercourse, he is not long able to support the horrors of solitude, and he joins in society as a refuge from himself. You perceive him uneasy and restless, but his motions are languid and dull. When he speaks, his enunciation is slow, and his expression deficient. If he attempts to talk on any indifferent subject, he insensibly wanders from his purpose, and forgets the train of his reasoning. At times he is himself sensible of this defect; and he frequently complains that he is incapable of being amused by those objects which formerly afforded him pleasure. His regard for others depends not on his former opinions of their worth, but on the patience with which they listen to his tale of distress, and on the sympathy they seem to feel in his sorrows. Hence it frequently happens that a hypochondriac is pleased with the company of a stranger, while, with his nearest connexions, he is sullen and silent. But while he is insensible to every object that does not relate immediately to himself, he is feelingly alive to every thing that may affect his personal safety. He multiplies dangers, and exaggerates misfortune; he becomes weak, irresolute, and cowardly. Suspicion, the attendant of cowardice, marks all his words and actions: every thing that is said or done he conceives is with an intention to injure or betray. He believes that he is set up as a mark for the malice of his fellow-creatures: he feels himself a solitary being in the midst of the creation; the horrors of the grave haunt his troubled imagination continually, and he pours forth tears of the bitterest anguish and distress.

Sleep, the solace of the unhappy, affords him no relief. As the power of reason fails, the pictures of the imagination become more and more gloomy, till, at last, assuming some form of terror, they suddenly arouse him from the beginning slumber. If happily deep sleep invade his senses, the state of insensibility lasts not long. Fancy resumes her sway; he is hurried in his dreams to the brink of some dreadful precipice; or he feels himself unsupported in the ocean; he struggles, he sinks under the waves, and the parted billows close upon his head.* But the most terrible form which haunts his sleep is that of a frightful spectre, which clings close to his breast, and loads him with an insupportable weight. He attempts to call for aid — he is incapable of utterance; he writhes — he struggles — he is almost suffocated; till, at last, collecting his strength into one convulsive effort, he awakes pale, breathless and trembling, his heart palpitating, and his body bedewed with a cold sweat. It is not in the power of language to exaggerate the misery which he suffers at this moment, nor can imagination paint a picture of deeper distress than that which his countenance displays.

In this detail, I have given an account of the symptoms which are most constant and most severe; but it must not be forgot that this disease, like every other, occurs in different persons with different degrees of violence.

In respect to the external appearances, it may be remarked that the eye is always dull and heavy, and the countenance pale.

It would be impossible to enumerate the various bodily disorders of which hypochondriacs have complained. Most of these are the offspring of fancy, but some also are real. In general the appetite is irregular, the digestion bad, and the patient is affected with costiveness; but these symptoms are by no means constant. The pulse is soft, slow, and

* The patient always awakes in his fall from the precipice, or as the waters close over him; in which last case he is sensible of the precise gurgling sound which those experience who actually sink under water.

sometimes irregular; the heart palpitates; wandering pains are felt (or pretended to be felt) in various parts of the body, especially about the region of the kidneys. There is generally a sense of weight, an inexpressible anxiety, about the *præcordia*, accompanied with frequent sighing. The patient complains of a sense of cold in various parts, particularly along the course of the spine, resembling the trickling of cold water. He is almost always affected with vertigo, *tinnitus aurium*, and severe headache. He frequently has a temporary deafness, dimness and confusion of sight, and an almost total abolition of sensation. The pain of his head is generally fixed about the vertex or coronal suture, and is circumscribed in a very small space.

These are the principal bodily complaints that occur in this disease, but few or none of them are invariable.

Hypochondriasis occurs at intervals, and is seldom altogether cured, unless the manner of life be changed. If any febrile complaint supervene, hypochondriasis for the time at least is entirely removed. It sometimes terminates in general madness, and sometimes dropsy puts a period to a life, which the patient has valued higher in proportion as it became more miserable. Several instances are on record of women who have been cured of hypochondriasis by the occurrence of pulmonary consumption; and in men it has often happily terminated in a fit of the gout. Authors have observed that hypochondriacs resist the influence of contagion in a wonderful manner. The same observation has been made in regard to every species of violent mental affection. Lorry remarks, that when those disorders which supervene to hypochondriasis prove fatal, the patient who was before so fearful, meets his approaching fate with remarkable intrepidity.

The varieties of the human constitution were, by the ancients, classed under four principal divisions, to each of which the name of temperament was given. Though the theories founded on these distinctions have been long exploded, these terms are still in use. Men of the melancholic temperament are said to be by nature predisposed to hypo-

chondriasis. Let us endeavour to ascertain what is meant by this expression. Authors have considered this temperament to be marked by a disposition in the mind to gloomy ideas. Dark-coloured hair, a rough skin, large veins, and defective perspiration, they consider as the external indications. Though these appearances are by no means inseparable from hypochondriasis, yet it must be admitted that it occurs most frequently in men of this description. It is likewise to be observed, that the predisposition to this disease is marked by a defect in vivacity, and a slowness of action and expression. The social affections are not lively, nor is the temper bold; impressions are not easily made, but their effects are lasting. The external appearances chiefly to be depended upon are such as indicate this state of mind; a dulness in the eye, and a certain fixedness of feature.

That temper which we distinguish by the general expression of melancholy, or a disposition in the mind to sorrow and mourning, is essentially different in different minds, both in its origin and effects; and in speaking of the disposition to hypochondriasis, much ambiguity has arisen from not attending to this distinction. But sorrow and mourning, though in the hypochondriac they assume a gloomy, timid, and selfish form, are often connected with a grandeur of sentiment, and sublimity of fancy, or with a soothing, melancholy tenderness. There are, perhaps, few more happy than those who are disposed to this kind of melancholy. On them the charms of nature are strongly impressed, and the pleasures they derive from the fine arts, especially music and poetry, are lively and exquisite. There are, perhaps, none more generally beloved; for their social affections are often strong, their tempers generous, and their minds are sometimes determined and bold.

It will appear evident, that in men so differently formed, the *causes* of sorrow will in general be very different; but, even on a given occasion, the melancholy of the one and the other will bear no resemblance. The last seem to have no predisposition to hypochondriasis. After all that has been

said, it cannot be denied that this disease sometimes occurs in minds of every kind of temper, in consequence of the combination or force of the incidental and external causes next to be described.

The incidental and external causes, or, as they are more technically named, the occasional causes, which operate in producing hypochondriasis, are numerous, and seem in general to act primarily on the intellectual organs. They may be distinguished into two kinds; such as tend to induce sadness or depression in general; and such as act particularly in fixing the attention on the diseases of the body, and consequently immediately induce hypochondriasis. Of the first kind are severe study, a sedentary life, some particular misfortune, excessive indulgence in the pleasures of women or wine, and in general any defect in the number or force or gaiety of external impressions. Perhaps cold and moisture operate chiefly (in producing this disease) by casting a gloom over the face of nature, and disposing to an inactive and sedentary life; for there appears to be no good foundation for the remark that a cold climate renders men torpid and dull, freezes the power of fancy, or extinguishes the social affections. The fire of the imagination is as ardent in Britain as it ever was in Greece or Italy; and while slavery maintains its empire over the warm countries bounded by the tropics, sentiments of liberty and independence have taken root in the North, and these are the noblest and warmest of feelings.

The causes which immediately induce hypochondriasis may be easily imagined. It often follows some disease, during which the patient has been greatly alarmed for his safety. The fevers of warm countries are generally fatal to Europeans: during their continuance, the apprehensions of the patients are often very great; and, after their recovery, they are sometimes unable to discharge their fears. Hence they are affected with a degree of hypochondriasis long after the original disorder has been removed, and frequently fly to cold climates to escape dangers, which exist only in their

troubled imaginations. The study of medicine is also frequently an immediate cause of hypochondriasis. The young student is astonished and alarmed at the various dangers to which human life is exposed. The impression is so strong on his imagination as frequently to create a belief that he himself is affected by the diseases which are described. By degrees, reason informs him of the fallacy of these terrors; or this cause of fear, like every other, ceases to operate by the frequency of its repetition.

But where the predisposition is strong, no cause directing the attention immediately to the diseases of the body seems to be necessary. In many people we find, that a depression of spirits having been produced, the mind of itself naturally runs into hypochondriasis. This malady is more particularly the lot of those, who, having spent an active youth in the pursuit of gain, retire in old age to a life of ease and indolence, without the knowledge or taste, or natural strength of mind, by which such a state can be supported and dignified.

Having considered the predisposition and the external causes producing hypochondriasis, I should now attempt to trace the circumstances to which the symptoms are immediately to be referred. This would be an investigation of the proximate cause, a task by no means easy.

In the present state of connection between soul and body, all our ideas seem to be originally derived from the impression of external objects, received by the organs of sense, and thence transmitted to the brain, which may be said to be the seat of perception and the instrument of thought. Hence, if the brain be disordered (or even the organs of sense), the intellectual exertions will be disturbed. The capacity of the musician may continue the same, but if his instrument be mistuned, the music will be harsh and discordant.

To every different idea or impression a different state of the brain is required; and as there can be only one state of the brain at once, there can exist at once only one percep-

tion. Our ideas, however, though originally derived from external objects, are afterwards variously combined, recalled and compared, by powers residing in the mind, but likewise exercised by means of the brain. These have been styled association, memory, and volition, of which last judgment is one of the effects. The perceptions in the mind are allowed to be of two kinds; the impression of external objects immediately felt, or the copies of these, properly called ideas, and recalled by memory. Volition is necessary to the exertion of memory as well as of judgment; but the mind is not vacant when the impressions of sense and the ideas of the memory cease to present themselves. Every one is sensible that when these are absent, there is a constant train of ideas gliding before the imagination, independent of our will, and presenting themselves in an infinite variety of combinations. They are called the ideas of the imagination, and are united by habits of association, often extremely difficult to be traced. Like the ideas of memory, they are originally derived from the impressions of sense; but they do not, like the former, represent these in a simple form, but combined in such a manner as frequently to bear no resemblance to any real object or form of nature. Thus, there are three kinds of perception with which the mind may be engaged; the impressions of sense, the ideas of memory, and the ideas of imagination. To the due exercise of judgment, and to the soundness of the human intellect, it is necessary that the different kinds of ideas should be properly balanced. We discover the falsehood of the pictures of the imagination by comparing them to the impressions of sense, or to the representations of memory, and it is in this way only that it can be detected. A person asleep and in a dream gives implicit credit to the extravagant fictions which offer themselves, because his volition is suspended, so that he cannot compare them to the representations of memory; and his external senses are shut up, so that he cannot compare them to the impressions of sense. In the waking state, in proportion as the mind is more employed with any par-

ticular train of ideas, these ideas will be (in general) more easily and more forcibly excited, till at last they acquire such strength, as often to intrude on the mind, in spite of the efforts of the will, and to resist the impression of present objects. Abstracted in thought, the philosopher is often so warmly engaged with the past and the future, as to be altogether inattentive to present impressions. This approaches to madness, but is not madness itself; because, though insensible to the impressions of sense, his volition is powerfully employed, and his ideas are under regulation. But before real madness takes place, the passions or the imagination must have given such force to a certain train of ideas, as to prostrate the powers of volition, as well as to shut out the impressions of sense. The man whose bosom is agitated by rage is truly mad; and the "fine phrenzy" of the poet is a phrase no less justly than beautifully applied to poetic enthusiasm. These are instances of temporary madness; but when it becomes a fixed disease, its approaches are gradual and slow. The mind is affected by the repeated operation of some passion or emotion, to which it was before particularly disposed. If the mind be not impressed by present objects, this passion or emotion directs the train of the ideas; if it be impressed by present objects, the same affection gives undue force to such impressions as have an affinity to its nature, and consequently diminishes those of an opposite kind. By exertion this power acquires new strength daily, the force of volition becomes fainter and fainter, when opposed to its operation, till at last it governs with despotic sway, and reason is utterly extinguished. * This is complete mania; but there are degrees of this disorder in which the intellect is only impaired; where the judgment appears sound in general, and is only defective on a particular subject. This partial madness, which assumes a great variety of forms, according

* This is the ordinary progress of mania; but there are exceptions. Sometimes, though rarely, the reason is destroyed by a sudden and violent impression on the senses, external or internal; and sometimes this disease is evidently induced by derangement in the circulation of the blood.

to the variety of causes which produce it, has been called melancholia; and to this class of mental disorders hypochondriasis is, in general, to be referred. A specific distinction has been attempted to be established between mania and melancholia, from the moral sense being always extinguished in the former; whereas in the latter it is said to be in general entire. This observation, however, is not strictly just, for in most cases of melancholia the sense of virtue is at least impaired. In strict language, indeed, those grand aspirations of the human mind which give sublimity to the poet, and enthusiasm to the patriot, might perhaps be considered as species of melancholia; and in this way it may be found that there are affections in our nature, the excess of which, though it may overcome the power of reason, yet carries us to a height of genius and grandeur of virtue, to which, by the aid of the most vigorous judgment we could never have attained. If this sense of the word be allowed, melancholia may be said to be connected with various and even opposite emotions and passions, with hope or despondence, joy or grief, love or hatred, according to the predisposition or the occasional causes: but that species of it named hypochondriasis is always connected with grief and fear. Other kinds of melancholia may ennoble the mind, and give generosity, intrepidity, and independence; this always debases it, and produces selfishness, cowardice, and distrust. Let us condense these remarks.

There is a certain train of ideas which pervade the mind, independent of volition, or of any active exertion: the ideas of the imagination.

We judge of the truth and propriety of these ideas, by comparing them with objects as they really exist, according to the information of our senses and the representations of memory: this is judgment, to the exercise of which it is necessary that we should have the power of arresting any idea in its passage through the mind, dismissing and recalling it at pleasure. *

* The mind cannot go directly to work in recalling an idea; by dismissing that already present, it makes room for its admission, &c.

But if the ideas of the imagination, in consequence of indulgence, or some other cause, acquire such force as to prevent or pervert the impressions of sense, and (by overcoming the volition) the representations of memory, the judgment or reason can no longer be exerted, and mania has supervened.

If only a certain train of ideas had acquired this influence, and the volition is able to dismiss them, though with great difficulty, the reason is only impaired, and the disease is melancholia.

And if this train of ideas be connected with grief and fear, and with an extreme attention to the diseases of the body, the patient labours under hypochondriasis.

Hence the proximate cause of hypochondriasis is a diseased state of the organs of perception, giving an undue force and permanence to certain ideas, and diminishing the effect of others. The organs of perception are, the external senses, the nervous system in general, but particularly the brain, which may be called the centre of sensation, and the source of thought. We suppose the brain to be diseased, because we cannot conceive how *that* which is immaterial can be *immediately* injured in its power of action by external causes. This derangement, we presume, depends on the *instrument*, not on the *cause* of thought. The subject is extremely obscure and unsatisfactory, and leads directly into the depths of materialism. But whether the brain be the *instrument* or the *origin* of thought, it is evident that in hypochondriasis it is diseased, though the mechanical change produced on its substance has not been discovered. Some authors assert, that in mania and melancholia the substance of the brain is rendered specifically lighter.

Various external injuries certainly disorder our intellect; the same effect is produced by too great force or too great feebleness in the circulation: and sometimes it should seem that a certain acrimony first appearing on the skin, and afterwards absorbed into the mass of circulating fluids, has produced madness. It is still more certain that folly or fatuity

has been the consequence of an extraordinary effusion of serum into the ventricles of the brain; and Lorry remarks, that in one instance, on opening the head of a man of great genius, who, after a long, deep melancholy, put an end to his life, a watery bubble was found extended on the corpus callosum. Instances of this kind might be multiplied, but they would not answer our purpose; for whatever change there may be on the substance of the brain in hypochondriasis, seems to be the consequence, and not the cause, of the reiteration of that train of ideas, to which the læsion of intellect is to be referred.

Here then we must rest, till we discover in what manner the images of external things are imprinted on the organ of thought, and how they become present to that portion of the Divinity by which we are informed. This knowledge is, perhaps, too high for mortality. The philosopher of Syracuse could have moved the earth, if he could have found a place to stand on unconnected with its motion; and when mind and matter are no longer united, we may discover the laws of their former connection.

[*The second part of this Essay, treating of the cure of hypochondriasis, has unfortunately been lost.*]

APPENDIX, No. III. Page 99.

MEMOIRS OF THE LATE DR. BELL, M. D.

Addressed to the Presidents and Members of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester. By Dr. Currie, of Liverpool.

Gentlemen,

The respect which you have expressed for our late member, Dr. George Bell, by the resolutions of the Society, which occasion this address, cannot fail to be highly pleasing to all those

who honour his memory. To me, this attention is particularly grateful; and I should not have been so slow in executing the task which you assigned me, had not long-continued sickness deprived me of the power. Now that my strength is somewhat restored, I embrace the earliest opportunity of presenting the translation which you have requested: and more fully to comply with your wishes, I shall prefix a short history of the life of my much-lamented friend.

Dr. Bell was born at his father's estate, in the county of Dumfries, in the autumn of the year 1755. He was the younger son of Richard Bell of Greenhill, by Miss Carruthers, of Dormont; and, by both sides of the house, was descended of families which claim high antiquity in that country, though little known to fame. The rudiments of his education he received at home; and he was very early distinguished by the quickness of his apprehension, and the general brilliancy of his parts. While he was yet very young, he had the misfortune to lose his father, who died at Bath in the year 1766. This loss was, however, in a great measure supplied by the care of his mother, — who yet survives to be a blessing to her friends, — and by the counsel and example of his brother, who, though very young, already displayed an uncommon degree of prudence and virtue. By them Dr. Bell was placed at the public school of Annan, then conducted by the Rev. Mr. Wright, in whose house he resided. Here he continued several years, and made a rapid progress in classical literature. In the year 1769, Mr. Wright, being appointed minister of the parish of New Abbey, in the neighbourhood of Dumfries, gave up public teaching; but Dr. Bell was continued some time longer in his family as a private pupil. Under the care of this excellent scholar, he had great advantages. At the time he left him, which was before the completion of his fifteenth year, he had obtained a perfect acquaintance with the Roman classics, a competent knowledge of Greek, he was initiated in the French language, was well skilled in geography, history, and the elements of mathe-

matics, and had commenced a critic in the English belles lettres.

In the autumn of the year 1770 he was sent to the University of Glasgow, where he continued for one session, in the pursuits of general study. In the latter end of 1771 he was removed to Edinburgh, and began his professional studies under the care and direction of his friend and relation Mr. Benjamin Bell, whose name is now well known in the medical world. At this university he continued till the summer of the year 1777, when he obtained the degree of Doctor of Medicine, and published the Inaugural Dissertation to which you are about to give a place in your records. During this long period Dr. Bell had time to apply himself, not only to the various branches of medicine, but to the different departments of philosophy and polite literature, necessary to a plan of liberal and general education. As his application was great his acquirements were very considerable; and he was so happy as to attract the notice of several persons eminent for science and learning. Of this number was the present learned professor of botany in Edinburgh, Dr. Hope, who early discovered his acute and enterprising genius, and distinguished him by his patronage and counsel. Of this number, likewise, was the celebrated Dr. Cullen, who honoured him with his particular friendship, and introduced him to the late Lord Kames, in a manner which was extremely flattering. His lordship, when engaged in the composition of the work which he afterwards published under the title of The Gentleman Farmer, applied to Dr. Cullen for information on some subjects connected with the philosophy of vegetation. The learned professor, being deeply engaged with other subjects, referred him to Dr. Bell, then in his twentieth year, whom, on that occasion, he introduced to his lordship. An acquaintance, thus begun, was matured into intimacy; and Dr. Bell spent a considerable part of one or two autumn vacations at the country seat of this venerable old man in the south of Scotland. Lord Kames mentioned him with honour in the work to which I have alluded; and

entertained a particular regard for him to the end of his life. When he made the tour of France, the letters of introduction which he procured from this illustrious philosopher were of the greatest service; and he was likewise much indebted to his friendship, when he afterwards settled as a physician at Berwick-upon-Tweed.

While Dr. Bell was pursuing his studies at Edinburgh, his elder brother, to whose most affectionate care he was highly indebted, met an untimely and unexpected fate. In the autumn of the year 1776 he perished in bathing in the river Kirtle, near the bottom of his own garden. This admirable young man was bred to the Scotch law. His talents and his virtues made his life most honourable, and his early death most deeply lamented.

Soon after his graduation Dr. Bell removed from Edinburgh to London, with the view of completing his education; and, after a winter's residence there, he passed over to France. At this time he relaxed from the severity of his studies, and mingled, more than might, from his former habits, have been expected, in the scenes of gaiety and pleasure with which Paris abounds.

In the latter end of the year 1778 he returned to Scotland. Some part of that and the succeeding winter he spent in Edinburgh; and during the rest of his time he in general lived with his mother and sisters at his paternal estate. While there, besides the *gratis* exercise of his profession among his friends and neighbours, he was much engaged in the study of the French and Roman classics; and particularly of the works of Virgil, of whom he was an enthusiastic admirer. In this interval he composed two MS. volumes of criticism on the Æneid.

In the spring of the year 1780 he settled as a physician at Berwick-upon-Tweed, with very general and powerful recommendations; and, in less than a year, he fell into the first practice in that quarter. But it having been represented to him that he might have a larger field for the exercise of

his professional talents at Manchester, he removed thither in the month of March, 1781.

It is not necessary to detail the incidents of the remaining part of his life. On this subject you cannot want information. He was admitted as a member into your society soon after his arrival in Manchester, and he continued such till his death. During this period, you all probably knew him; and it becomes you, better than me, to estimate the degree of regard and esteem with which he was honoured. It only remains that I give a short account of the concluding scene; to which, by the privilege of friendship, I was a mournful witness; and on which I reflect with mingled sensations of pain and pleasure, which I forbear to describe.

On the 20th of last January, 1784, he was seized with the symptoms of a fever; which, from the first, he apprehended would prove fatal. He requested the advice of his friends, Dr. Manwaring and Dr. Percival; and they attended him, through the whole illness, with the utmost kindness and assiduity. But, notwithstanding every assistance which medicine could bring, the disease proceeded with most unfavourable omens. He clearly foresaw his approaching fate; and prepared for the moment of dissolution with unshaken fortitude. On the eighth day he became delirious; and from this time forward he possessed his reason by intervals only. A vigorous constitution supported him, under a violent disease, till the evening of the fourteenth day; when, after having sustained many severe conflicts, his strength became utterly exhausted, and he expired without a struggle. In this manner was terminated the life of a man, who had virtues to procure the love, and talents to command the respect, of his fellow-creatures; and who, by an affecting, though not uncommon, dispensation of Providence, was cut off in the beginning of his career.

Dr. Bell was endued by nature with a firm undaunted mind, a vigorous understanding, and a feeling heart. All his impressions were strong, and his convictions deeply rooted. From these, and from these only, he spoke and acted. He

was utterly free from every species of dissimulation and deceit. His conduct was always direct, and his purpose evident. His deliberations were more swayed by what he himself thought right, than by what was likely to be thought right by others; and when his determination was once made, he was not easily diverted from it, either by fear or favour. His adherence to truth was strict and uniform, even from his early youth. His spirit was too elevated to submit to falsehood, from whatever source it might be supposed to arise; whether from the suggestions of vanity, the impressions of fear, or the dictates of malice. His humanity was pure and unaffected. No man did a kind action with less consciousness of merit, or less purpose of gaining applause. His passions were warm, his affections strong, his sense of honour nice, his spirit, when provoked, high and indignant. In the more intimate relations of life he was greatly beloved; in many of the qualities necessary for friendship he has seldom been equalled. Through the whole of his conduct there appeared a strain of manly sincerity. From his cradle to his grave, he perhaps never, on any one occasion, sacrificed reality to appearances, or courted applause from others, which was not justified by the approbation of his own heart.

These high endowments do not often appear without their kindred defects. A fearless temper and an open heart are seldom strictly allied to prudence, and are apt to inspire a contempt of appearances, which may have serious consequences in the business of life. That this was instanced in Dr. Bell those who loved him best are forced to allow. He was not always sufficiently attentive to the decorum of manners: he was too much disposed to break through those restraints which a necessary ceremony has imposed on the intercourse of society. Free from affectation himself, he was quick in discerning it in others; and he seldom allowed any thing which bore its resemblance to pass unnoticed, even in those for whom he entertained the highest esteem. The consequence which vanity often assumes, and which benevolence sees and admits, he was too much inclined to

expose. This bias of mind appeared before he was eight years of age. At that time, the uncommon liveliness of his temper, and quickness of his apprehension, made him universally admired as a child of extraordinary talents. Every sally of his imagination was encouraged; and the disposition to which I have alluded grew up into a habit, which great tenderness of heart and strength of judgment could never effectually overcome. The features of his character were indeed strongly marked throughout from his early youth. When yet a boy he had the same independence of spirit, and originality of mind, which marked his riper years.

Failings such as his have their most unfavourable effects in general intercourse. In the eye of friendship, they appear of little account, when weighed against a liberal, cultivated, and vigorous mind, and a temper brave, generous, and sincere.

Dr. Bell acquired knowledge with remarkable facility; but he did not communicate it with equal ease. This was chiefly owing to early habits of verbal and grammatical criticism, in which he had greatly indulged. He was extremely nice in the choice of words; he would use no expressions that were not exactly fitted to his ideas; and in his dislike of every thing strained or affected, he had declared war against some of the natural ornaments of speech. His reading was extensive, and his learning various. In every thing which related to his profession he was minutely informed. His education had afforded him every opportunity of improvement: his application was great, and his acquirements were proportionably valuable. In classical literature he had few equals; and in historical and philosophical knowledge he had not many superiors.

The qualities of Dr. Bell's mind required a state of action. He was eminently fitted for situations of difficulty or danger; and, had his lot been cast differently, the enthusiasm of his spirit, and the strength of his faculties, might have enrolled his name in the list of those which go down to future ages with honour and applause. It was his misfortune that his situation did not always present objects of sufficient import-

ance to excite his attention, and call forth his faculties; and that, like many other men of genius, he was often unable to originate those literary exertions, which sometimes bring fame, and which generally bring happiness. His spirits, indeed, were not equal. He was often lively, cheerful, and familiar, and sometimes grave, inattentive, and reserved. Circumstances, which it would be painful and improper to relate, contributed to throw some degree of gloom over his latter days. But he was naturally subject, at times, to those ebbings of the mind, as an admired writer expresses himself, which generally accompany great sensibility; a state, from which the transition is sometimes more easy to levity and mirth, than to the sober exercises of reason.

It is common to expect, even in the more minute parts of the conduct of men of allowed superiority of talents, some marks of intention and design, by which such superiority might be indicated. But this is, I think, an error. The characteristic of genius is simplicity. A lofty spirit submits with difficulty to restraint or disguise; and the higher emotions of the mind are seldom compatible with a nice attention to little things. It is, however, to be lamented, that men of great endowments are often deficient in that self-command, which should give regularity to conduct, and steadiness to exertion. But let us not too hastily condemn them. The powers of genius impose the severest task on the judgment. The imagination in which they reside must always be strong; the sensibility by which they are attended must often be wayward. To restrain, to excite, and to direct the exertions of a mind so constituted, according to the dictates of reason, must frequently produce a most painful warfare; and if to succeed in such contests be not always given to the strong, let the weak rejoice that they are seldom called to the encounter.

Years and experience would most probably have remedied, in a great measure, the defects in Dr. Bell's character; and as he became more fully known, it may be presumed that he would have acquired a degree of reputation suited to his

great integrity and abilities. Yet it cannot be denied, that a temper so open, and a conduct so little affected by the opinions or prejudices of others, were not perfectly calculated for success in a world, in which the most honest heart must often be veiled, and the loftiest spirit must sometimes bend.

Such, gentlemen, was the man whose memory you wish to preserve in the records of your Society. I knew him better than any person living, and I loved him more than I shall attempt to express. I have not, however, dealt in unmixed eulogy, which sometimes may amuse the living, but which can never characterise the dead. It belonged to him I have attempted to commemorate, to be as jealous of undeserved praise as of undeserved censure; and I have endeavoured to delineate his character in such a manner as his magnanimous spirit would have approved. I have not, knowingly, extenuated his faults; and you will not believe I have set down aught in malice. What would it avail me to deviate from the truth? The voice of censure cannot pierce the grave, nor flattery soothe the ear of death.

APPENDIX, No. IV. Page 140.

(" *The following Letters on the Plan for erecting a* LUNATIC ASYLUM *at* LIVERPOOL, *having been several times applied for by persons engaged in similar undertakings, are now given to the Public at large.*" — Medical Reports, vol. 2. Appendix II.)

Mr. GORE, Printer of the Liverpool Advertiser.

Liverpool, August 29. 1789.

SIR,

Be so kind as to give a place in your useful paper to the following remarks on public charities, and particularly on the proposal for a Lunatic Asylum.

In forming an idea of the connection between the various ranks of society, we may consider a nation as a great trading company; and if we suppose this company to be engaged in both manufactures and commerce, these terms will, in one sense or other, apply to almost all the occupations of civilised life. Each partner in the business is not equally *concerned*, it is true, because every one does not throw the same share of property, talents, and activity into the common stock; but all are interested in the general success, and the welfare of each is connected with that of the whole.

A business of this kind naturally divides itself into various branches, in which the different partners must engage according to their respective knowledge and abilities. That there may be regularity and order, there must be a proper subordination; each must exert himself honestly in his particular department; and while some plan and regulate, others must labour and execute.

Of these two divisions the last, indeed, is by far the most numerous. A few suffice to give general directions, but many are required for the manual operations. The manufactures carried on are almost all of them from raw materials, and demand much time and labour to bring them to perfection, and the exchange of these manufactures with those of other *great trading companies*, is a business of great enterprise and exertion. The earth is hard and stubborn, the ocean is dark and tempestuous. To conquer the ruggedness of the one, and to triumph over the dangers of the other, the great bulk of mankind must work and toil. It is, indeed, evident, that the various classes of men grow more and more numerous the lower they descend. A well-regulated society may be compared for its solidity to a pyramid. It may be compared to a pyramid, likewise, because it terminates in a point, because the strata of the building are of greater circumference as they approach the ground, because each inferior stratum supports all that are above it, and because the lowest stratum, which is the widest, sustains the building: here the analogy fails. The foundation of a

pyramid becomes more solid, the greater the superincumbent weight; it only sinks the deeper in the earth. But the foundation of this living edifice is made of less firm materials, and if it be too much pressed upon, it will crumble away.

This comparison may serve to illustrate the immense consequence of the labouring poor. They demand our constant attention. To inform their minds, to repress their vices, to assist their labours, to invigorate their activity, and to improve their comforts; — these are the noblest offices of enlightened minds in superior stations; offices which are of the very essence of virtue and patriotism, which must attract the approbation of the good and wise, and which will obtain the favour of the Eternal Being, who is the Great Father of us all.

But of all the claims which the poor have upon us, there is none so pressing, or so generally admitted, as that for assistance when sinking under disease. Accordingly, institutions for the relief of the sick poor have been established all over the kingdom, and are, perhaps, the most unexceptionable of all public endowments. In this great and increasing town institutions of this kind have been supported with singular liberality, and have been attended with singular success. One disease only has no provision for it; one disease, awful in its appearance, and destructive in its influence, but of so peculiar a nature as not to admit of relief under any general establishment. It is needless to say, that this is insanity. The difficulty and expense of founding asylums for lunatics have been the only reasons, it may be presumed, why they have not been universal; since it cannot be doubted, that they have the same general recommendations as hospitals for the sick, and that they even have peculiar claims in their favour, both of policy and of humanity.

Of the various evils to which men are subject, there is, indeed, none so dreadful as insanity. Other calamities are exterior, and pass away with the flight of time; or if they are mental, they yield to the constant succession of external impressions. If human nature is unable to throw off other

evils it happily sinks under them, and death presents itself to the good and the brave, as the termination of calamity. But madness, while it hastens not the approach of death, destroys all that makes life valuable. It is not a single enjoyment of which it bereaves us, nor a single blessing that it carries away. It preys not on the gifts of fortune, but on the attributes of reason, and strikes at once at all the powers and privileges of man!

Yet if the victims of this fearful malady were incapable of relief, as some rashly imagine, we should have only to tremble at their fate, and to mourn over the degradation of our nature. But while experience teaches us that their situation is by no means hopeless, as men and as Christians we are called on to exert ourselves in their behalf. If affliction of any kind engage our attention, if disease in any form excite our compassion, let not those be denied our pity and our succour, whose affliction is the most deep, and whose disease is the most terrible.

In the institution of a lunatic asylum there is this singularity, that the interests of the rich and poor are equally and immediately united. Under other diseases the rich may have every assistance at their own homes, but under insanity relief can seldom be obtained but from an establishment for the treatment of this particular disease. Hence the objects of a lunatic asylum are twofold — to provide accommodation for the poor suitable to their circumstances, and to make provision for those of superior stations, who are able to remunerate the expense. The objects of such an institution are twofold in another sense: it holds out a shelter both for the curable and incurable. To the first it proposes the restoration of reason; and while it relieves society from the burden of the last, it covers the hapless victims themselves from the dangers of life, and from the selfish contempt of an unfeeling world.

A lunatic asylum differs from hospitals for the sick in another important particular: these require not only a great expense for their original establishment, but a great annual

contribution for carrying them on; since the patients in hospitals have not only their lodging and attendance gratuitous, but their food also, and sometimes their clothing. On the contrary, in a lunatic asylum the expense of diet and clothing (except in very particular cases), never falls on the institution; this being defrayed for the paupers by the parishes to which they belong; and for those in better circumstances, by the guardians of their property. It is the policy of an asylum to make these two classes connect with each other, so that the increased payments made by the rich may serve to diminish, in some degree, the demands on the poor. Hence the annual expense of an asylum is small, compared with that of hospitals, properly so called, though the expenditure required for the erection and fitting up of the building must, no doubt, be considerable. But it is not the character of the inhabitants of Liverpool to let a plan for a public institution, that can be proved to be useful or honourable, fall to the ground for want of contributions to carry it on, much less a scheme of humanity so interesting and important. Let the usefulness of this scheme be made apparent to the public, and its success is infallible.

Every informed mind must indeed rejoice, that the general meeting called at the Infirmary to consider of the propriety of an asylum for lunatics were unanimous in their approbation of the measure, and that a committee appointed by that meeting are now preparing a plan for carrying it into effect. If the funds for the asylum can be raised, without infringing on the interest or property of the Infirmary, the friends of that hospital will doubtless rejoice to see the institutions connected together, by which mutual advantages may be obtained, and the great object of all such charities, the relief of human misery, be promoted and extended.

The only other point to be considered is the extent of this asylum. The most prudent conduct will be, not to enlarge it much beyond the present necessity; but to erect it on a plan which may admit of future additions, according as future experience may point out that they are required.

Under these restrictions, it is to be hoped that the public voice will be unanimous in favour of the proposed establishment; and that the magistrates especially will lend it their support. So shall another evidence be reared, in addition to those which already reflect credit on the munificence of Liverpool. Our public buildings for pleasure, as well as business, are in a high style of elegance and splendour; our institutions for the care of man's perishing body are already, perhaps, brought near to perfection: our honours will be increased, and the system of our charities completed, by an institution for the health of his immortal mind.

J. C.

No. 2.

Mr. Gore.

October 15. 1789.

Sir,

It gives me pleasure to find that my letter to you of the 25th of August, on the proposal for a Lunatic Asylum, has been so far noticed that its defects have been discovered, and that some gentlemen are desirous of seeing them supplied. I proceed, therefore, willingly to discuss those points which connect the subject with our particular situation, and which the limits of your paper prevented from being included in my first address. — It may seem, indeed, that as the measure has been approved at a general meeting called by the mayor, where the scheme proposed by the committee was examined and adopted, it is not now necessary to enter farther into the business. But as objections have been started from some respectable quarters, and as several gentlemen of property and character seem as yet to hesitate on the propriety of the measure, it may not be improper to consider it more particularly.

1st. It is asked how our lunatics have been hitherto bestowed, and what inconveniences have been felt from the want of an asylum?

Hitherto, such as have not been sent to a distance have been confined in the poor-house,—a building erected for the reception of helpless infancy and of declining age, which contains within its walls upwards of a thousand objects of this description, and which neither has, nor can be supposed to have, proper accommodation for lunatics, who require so very peculiar a treatment. Hence the burdening the poor-house with the insane has been attended by many serious inconveniences. It has introduced disquiet and disorder into the institution, when the lunatics have been suffered, as is common, to run at large; and where they have been placed in confinement, no adequate provision or attendance having been provided for it, unhappy consequences have followed to these hapless beings, over some of which humanity laments, and delicacy must draw a veil. In such a state of things much could not possibly be attempted for the recovery of reason; but the more moderate have been kept as quiet as possible, and some of the more furious have been sent away. The faculty who have attended the sick of this great hospital, and the committee who have superintended it, have done their duty faithfully: it is only to be lamented that the evil, on the present system, appears to be irremediable. When the poor-house shall be relieved from the insane, the exertions of the respectable magistrates, who are now so laudably employed in improving its regulations, will be more successful. Their attention being confined to the proper objects of this institution, they will then find it easier to extirpate vice, disorder, and guilty idleness from this great family of the lowest and most ignorant class of society; to prepare the young for entering the world with habits of industry and sobriety, and to give comfort and quiet to the old, whose days of labour are past, and whose chief duty it is to prepare themselves for a future world.

2d. It is said, that though an asylum for lunatics may be desirable, yet that sufficient accommodation may be found for them, without erecting a building on purpose. Some have pointed to the present House of Correction as a proper

place; and others mention, that cells may possibly be appropriated to them in the New Gaol. That any plan which would separate the lunatics from the general mass of the poor would be an improvement on the present system it is but fair to allow; but to each of these proposals there are strong objections. To the first may be offered the objections already stated, against complicating the discipline of a poor-house with that of an institution for the insane, with which it has no alliance. It may be urged, likewise, that the present House of Correction, when vacated, will be wanted for a fever-ward to the poor-house, to prevent the spreading of those contagions which, with every care, will sometimes be introduced into the building, and sometimes generated within its walls. And it may be added, that the House of Correction is very unfit for an asylum for lunatics, from its structure and size, which a single glance will show to be inadequate to the purpose; and from its situation, which is exposed to idle curiosity and perpetual noise. On the other hand, the appropriation of any part of the new prison to the reception of the insane, may be supposed a very crude notion. That great and scientific edifice is destined to a very different purpose; if it were not, no part of it could be adapted to incurables, without considerable alterations; and who would seriously think of planting an institution for the recovery of reason within the precincts of a gaol?

The truth is, these proposals have proceeded from an imperfect notion of the design of a lunatic asylum. If its intention were merely to provide a prison-house for the insane, where they might be hid from the sight of their friends till the grave should hide them for ever, such proposals would deserve consideration: but this is only one object of an asylum, and that one the least important. It has the greater object of restoring reason itself; and such notions do not correspond with this high design.

3d. But, while these schemes appear too narrow, another has been proposed that seems to run into the contrary extreme. Some warm supporters of the Lunatic Asylum (particularly

one gentleman, who has the power and the will to give it most generous assistance,) are of opinion that it ought to be a distinct institution, placed in the country, though near the town, where it may possess the advantage of the purest air, with a considerable space for the amusement of the patients in different exercises, and for their occupation in gardening and other innocent and healthful employments, when their minds are sufficiently calm to be engaged in this way. To this proposal the difficulty and expense of carrying it into effect are the only objections; for it cannot be denied that it is, in the abstract, the best of all others. Dr. Hunter, of York, in a letter to the writer of this, gives a decided preference to this plan, and earnestly wishes that every county in the kingdom would adopt it. His opinion is the more to be regarded, because it is founded on actual experience, having himself been the principal agent in establishing an institution on this plan in his own county, to which he is the sole physician, — the York Lunatic Asylum. But it is to be feared, that such a plan can only be successful when proposed as a county establishment; and it does not appear that Lancashire is likely to unite in a measure of this kind. In Manchester a lunatic hospital, connected with the infirmary there, has long flourished; and a similar establishment at Liverpool will probably answer every exigence that may arise for many years to come. Should other districts of the county require, in process of time, similar establishments, they will, doubtless, in this, as in other instances, follow the example of the leading towns. That the expense of a separate establishment in the country may be fairly computed, let us attend to a few obvious facts. In the Asylum at York the patients are divided into eight classes, which pay according to eight different rates, regularly progressive, from six to twenty shillings a week. It may be presumed that these rates defray the expense of maintenance; and that the sums raised for this institution by contribution have been employed in the original purchase and improvement of the ground, in the building and furnishing the asylum, and in the

expense of a separate establishment. By the statement published on the first of January, 1788, these sums appear to be as follows: — Raised

By Benefactions - - -	£9155
By Legacies - - - -	1718
By Collections - - -	813
In all -	£11,686

There is no account of any accumulating fund. The York Asylum is adapted to sixty, or perhaps seventy patients.

As the purchase of land, building, &c. cannot be expected to be cheaper in the vicinity of Liverpool than of York, a similar plan could not be executed here at a lower rate. And though we built a house for the reception of thirty patients only, yet, as the quantity of ground required, and the expenses of the establishment, would not be much less, the sum of the expense could not be calculated at less than two thirds of that of the York Asylum. But it seems scarcely to be expected that eight thousand pounds should be procured for this purpose in the town and neighbourhood of Liverpool, where some of the leading men seem as yet indisposed to a Lunatic Asylum on the easiest and most economical plan. Should the opulence and public spirit of any individual, or of any combination of individuals, convince the writer that his doubts are ill-founded, he will heartily adopt this more extended scheme, and promote it by the best of his humble endeavours. In the mean time the plan approved at the General Meeting seems deserving of every encouragement, not only as the simplest and least expensive, but as the only one likely to succeed, and as one that bids fair to accomplish all the more important objects. By combining the Lunatic Asylum with the Infirmary, there will not only be an immense saving of expense in the building itself, but in the annual disbursements. The same offices, apothecary, and board of economy, will serve both, besides other advantages; and for a third of eight thousand pounds, all that is wanted may possibly be obtained. To this union the same

objections do not apply, as to a house for lunatics in conjunction with the poor-house. The discipline of an Infirmary and of a Lunatic Asylum have similar objects, and require the same habits, and nearly the same degree of watchfulness and attention. The institutions themselves are closely allied in their nature; the first affords relief to diseases of the body, the second to diseases of the mind. That these are more nearly connected than is commonly imagined, it would be easy to show, if this were the proper place to enter on such discussions. Madness, indeed, can only be called a disease of the mind, because its most striking symptom is the derangement of the intellect. The disorder, it is reasonable to suppose on every theory, is seated not in the agent, but in the instrument of thought; and to borrow an expression from the letter of an enlightened physician already mentioned, a madman may be defined, "a man out of tune."

4th. This subject must not, however, be dismissed without noticing an objection to the plan which has been adopted, that comes from a very respectable quarter. It has been supposed that the vicinity of the Lunatic Asylum to the Infirmary might be hurtful to this charity, from the patients in it being disturbed by the noise of the *insane*. As this objection is an important one, it has been particularly examined. Where experience can be had, it is always safest to have recourse to it, and this has been done in the present instance. On this particular point, Dr. Hunter of York; Dr. Simmons, physician to St. Luke's Hospital, London; Dr. Eason, physician to the Infirmary and Lunatic Hospital of Manchester; Dr. Moncrieff of Bristol, and Dr. Cleghorn of Glasgow, have been consulted; and the writer of this has also had ample communication on the structure and economy of lunatic establishments with Dr. Gilchrist of Dumfries. He has likewise, by the assistance of Mr. Christie of London, obtained a plan and an account of the Lunatic Hospital at Montrose. To detail the information contained in these letters would be tedious and needless; they are open to the

inspection of any gentleman who may wish to peruse them, as well as a copy of the words in which the objection was stated. It will be sufficient to say, that on this point the answers of such as have had experience are clear and satisfactory. In the Dumfries Infirmary, lunatics were at first confined on the ground-floor, under the same roof with the other patients; but their numbers having increased, a separate building has been erected for them, which stands as a wing to the hospital, and, as appears by a plan of the whole, at a distance from it of thirty feet. In this instance, the objection, it is clear, has never occurred. In Manchester the Lunatic Hospital is in close connection with the Infirmary, as those who have visited that town must have seen; yet here we have the express assertion of Dr. Eason, that no such inconvenience has been felt; and this account has been confirmed by Mr. Darbey, a very ingenious gentleman, who has seen the spot on which our asylum is intended to be built, and who served the office of apothecary to the Manchester Infirmary for twenty years.

Mr. Christie and Dr. Simmons mention that this objection was started to the vicinity of St. Luke's with the Lying-in Hospital, but that it was over-ruled, and that experience has proved it to be merely hypothetical; yet by the plan of St. Luke's, which the former has been so kind as to send, the distance between these buildings is only forty feet. Between the Liverpool Infirmary and the projected Asylum, a distance of fifty yards, if necessary, may be obtained. If to these instances we add, that the trustees of Guy's Hospital, with all the experience of other institutions before them, and with a fund that is adequate to almost any expense, are about to erect a building in connection with that infirmary exactly upon our plan, it is hoped that the danger apprehended in our case will no longer be feared.

Every new scheme must expect to meet with objections; and he whose judgment suggests them to him, does society a service in proposing them openly. If they are well-founded, they may prevent an ill-advised project; if they are founded

in part, they may improve a hasty measure; and if they are altogether erroneous, they will serve to illustrate a wise purpose and a judicious scheme. Those gentlemen, therefore, who have openly opposed the plan of the committee, conceiving that a better might be executed, are to be applauded for withholding their assistance till their objections are in some degree removed; and such as have hesitated in their approbation of any measure of the kind, not perceiving the grounds on which it is supported, have done wisely to withhold their countenance for further information. That the scheme of the committee does not comprehend every *possible advantage*, it is but candid to allow; but this is in no respect singular. We must not reject those advantages which are the best that can be obtained, because they are not as good as may be conceived; nor refuse a blessing because it has some tincture of alloy. Bounded in our knowledge as well as in our power, we cannot expect that the work of our hands shall have the attribute of perfection.

To those who may be surprised that a measure which seems now so desirable should not have been sooner carried into effect, the difference between the objects of this and of other charities may be pointed out. The cries of poverty and sickness will be heard; but insanity, alas! cannot make its complaint! — Hence the victims of this disease have passed too much unregarded; and when they have been noticed, they have been thrust from the sight into prison-houses, whose secrets, if they could unfold them, might often "harrow up the soul." A late national distress has, however, forced the subject upon general attention; the example of Liverpool, there is good reason to believe, will speedily be followed by several of the principal cities in the kingdom; and among the happy consequences of the issue of that calamity, future times will probably enumerate a more general provision, and a more humane treatment of this hapless class of our fellow-creatures.

The writer of this is not biassed in favour of the proposal for a Lunatic Asylum by his having been the author of the

scheme; on the contrary, it was proposed originally without his knowledge: that honour belongs exclusively to others. But as there is a public as well as private duty attached to every station of life, when this proposal was brought forward, he conceived it came within the scope of his professional duties to form a judgment upon it on the best information in his power. The grounds of this judgment he now lays before the public; and he has the satisfaction of thinking, that though this may appear a useless labour, it cannot possibly do harm. If the scheme is a good one, it cannot be too nicely examined: it is the character of truth and wisdom to appear more advantageous the more they are seen; it is for fraud and folly only to shrink from the light.

J. C.

P. S. Since writing the above, I have been favoured with a letter from Dr. Hunter of York, in which he has been so kind as to rectify one or two misapprehensions respecting the Asylum for lunatics there. He mentions, that instead of sixty or seventy, this building, with the last additions, will contain ninety patients; and that the sum total of its expense is something more than ten thousand pounds; fifteen hundred having been laid by for additions and repairs, a circumstance not mentioned in the report of 1787, from which my statements were drawn.

Dr. Hunter is farther of opinion, that a separate building and establishment for thirty lunatics in the neighbourhood of this town, might be reared for a much smaller sum than what I have supposed; conceiving, no doubt, that the experience derived from the Asylum at York, which was in a great measure a new undertaking, would point out a less expensive method of attaining the objects in view.

Though I have argued on the supposition of a building for thirty patients only, yet I am of opinion that we ought not to erect one for less than forty, the grounds of which shall (if necessary) be laid before the public on some future occasion; and though in deference to this learned and respectable phy-

sician (whose kindness and liberality are worthy of every acknowledgment) his opinion is published, as well as the facts he has offered, yet my predilection for the plan adopted, of connecting our Asylum with the Infirmary, as the best that can be pursued in our circumstances, continues as firm as before.

In treating on this subject, the following fact (which came very lately to my knowledge) ought to find a place, as it may serve to illustrate more strongly the propriety of some establishment for the insane: —

It appears that Mr. Howard visited Liverpool several years ago; and, witnessing the situation of the lunatics in our poor-house, that he was impressed with our want of a separate building for their reception. This, it should seem, dwelt on his mind; and some time afterwards he wrote a letter to the mayor of that year (Mr. Pole) from Constantinople, recommending the erection of a lunatic asylum, and offering fifty pounds towards it whenever it should be undertaken, a sum which his executors would be instructed to pay, on production of the letter, should his life be demanded of him before his return. Hence the name of *John Howard of Cardington* graces our subscription-list. Mr. Howard has since been in Liverpool; and though he had much conversation with the writer of this, as well as with others, on the subject of our charitable institutions, it does not appear that he took any notice of his own remarkable offer. He learned, however, that the scheme for erecting a lunatic asylum had been brought forward by a public-spirited gentleman; and though deferred for the time, that it was likely, in the course of a few years, to be carried into effect. Mr. Howard is again gone abroad; and should he live to return and revisit Liverpool, it is hoped, in this particular, he will not be disappointed. But this is a pleasure which, it is feared, he may never enjoy.*

Having awakened the powers of reason and the true spirit of charity throughout the nations of Europe, he is now

* He died on this journey, at Cherson. — J. C.

attempting to diffuse them among the disciples of Mahomet. While the sovereigns of Russia and Germany are carrying devastation and slaughter along the coasts of the Euxine and the shores of the Archipelago, this *prophet of mercy* approaches the benighted followers of the Crescent from another quarter, with the mission of peace and love. He was last heard of from St. Petersburgh. Thence passing through Moscow, he purposed to enter the Turkish empire, eastward of the sea of Azof, to avoid the storms of war. The route he has marked out crosses the mountains of Circassia, and passes along the shores of the Caspian into Persia and Armenia. His pilgrimage will then extend across Arabia Petrea, and through the Isthmus of Suez into the Continent of Africa. If life is granted him, he will traverse the nations that inhabit the southern shores of the Mediterranean; and, passing into Europe by the Straits of Gibraltar, return by Spain and France to England. To this singular tour he has devoted three years; and he himself, it is said, has little expectation of living to go through it. It is most probable, therefore, that we shall not see him again. But no matter: — wherever he finds a grave, the spot will be hallowed, and his name consecrated in the admiration of posterity.

Quo nihil majus, meliusve terris
Fata donavere, bonique Divi;
Nec dabunt, quamvis redeant in aurum
Tempora priscum. Hor.

James Currie.

Liverpool, 12th November 1789.

N.B. The Lunatic Asylum was completed in the year 1790, nearly on the plan recommended above. It has accommodations for sixty-four patients. No inconvenience has ever been experienced from its vicinity to the Infirmary.

J. C.

May 7. 1804.

APPENDIX, No. V. Page 151.

THE RECLUSE. No. 3.

Consiliis habitus non futilis auctor.

VIRGIL.

WHEN I had resolved to take upon me the task of addressing the public once a week, I naturally began to revolve in my mind the best method of procuring my opinions a favourable hearing, and rendering my advice effectual to its purpose. This led me to consider the different modes of conveying our sentiments to each other, with their comparative success; and this again into some reflections on the character of the human mind, and its various sympathies. The result of my meditations on these important points, I shall communicate in part to my readers.

Whoever undertakes to counsel another, assumes to himself, or seems to assume, a superiority of knowledge or judgment on the points in question, and ought, therefore, to consider whether his age and character, or acknowledged attention to the subject, are such as to make this claim as readily admitted as it is advanced. It may be that we deceive ourselves in regard to our talents or information, or both; it may be that the person advised has already decided for himself, or, that he does not admit of *our* right to advise him. He may be disgusted with good advice from any quarter, if it be accompanied with the slightest appearance of roughness or arrogance; or he may repel it under every advantage of manner and address, from the pride and self-sufficiency of his own mind, impatient of counsel or of controul. In many cases there is a combination of these difficulties, and in almost every case one or other of them presents itself. Prudent

men, therefore, seldom offer unasked advice; and are even shy of giving it when requested, notwithstanding the gratification of vanity which an appeal to their judgment must naturally afford. To step forward with unsolicited opinions on the conduct of those around us, is, in general, the characteristic of folly; though sometimes this task is assumed by a generous and enlightened friendship, which risks its own peace for the happiness of others, and discharges one of the most difficult as well as one of the noblest of duties.

These remarks apply more immediately to the open intercourse of individuals in private life. The objections to giving counsel, and the obstacles to its proper reception, are certainly much lessened, when the person who offers it is concealed from their view, and when he addresses himself, not to an individual, but to the public at large. When he who takes upon him the office of correction or instruction is unknown, our resentment wants an object on which it may fix itself; and when his advice or reproof is offered to us only as members of the general community, we can submit to receive it patiently; because it is not attended by open reproach — because we are seldom ashamed of what we do in company — because our share of the censure is small, — or because, by an easy process of self-love, we can divest ourselves even of this, and bestow our portion on those around us.

In some cases these considerations may, indeed, be supposed to render advice or instruction less effectual, by making it less personal. But this is, in general, much more than compensated by the advantage of often addressing the reason when it is unclouded, and speaking to the heart when the selfish passions are at rest. In these quiet and still moments, truth insinuates itself into minds darkened by ignorance and error, and obtains an empire over the understanding which can never be overthrown; and hence it is, that the press has become the great instrument of instruction, the emancipator of man, an engine fitted to move a world!

It may, however, be la id down as a truth almost universal, that the influence of our opinions on others is most happy

and successful, when they are presented with gentleness and modesty. There is a spirit in the human breast that justly rises in opposition to arrogance, from whatever quarter it may come, and retorts the contempt of vanity with equal contempt. Authors especially ought never to forget, that the human race forms a great democracy, in which every man has an equal right to think and act; and that he who would impose his sentiments on others, by assuming the tones of insult, or the language of command, even though he should be pleading the cause of liberty itself, is a tyrant in his heart, and ought not to be trusted. Alas! how often is this forgotten! How many even of the votaries of truth injure her cause by peevishness and arrogance in the very mode of their first address! How often is vanity thinly disguised under the mask of honesty, and the spirit of uncharitableness obtruded as virtuous indignation, or undaunted zeal! Is there, then, no warmth that is justifiable and useful? There is; but he who feels it must begin by conciliating the regard, and convincing the judgment, of those whom he addresses. He may afterwards give way to an honest, but repressed ardour: the sympathy of wisdom and virtue will attend him; and he may hope to communicate from himself to those around him that well-regulated fervour of mind, the joint operation of reason, fancy, and feeling, which is so quick to understand, so ardent to embrace, so favourable to all that is extensive and profound in thought, and that is fearless and great in action.

These observations, I am aware, require some illustration, but I cannot offer it now. At some future time I hope to make the truth of my remarks more apparent, by applying them to the conduct of some of those enlightened men, who have figured in the republic of letters, and whose names are inscribed on the tablet of fame. For the present it is sufficient that, by this general account of my sentiments, I mark my sense of what ought to be my own conduct in offering my opinions to the public; and if I should not be found to follow it exactly, I shall only afford another illustration to the well-

known maxim, that the actions of men cannot with safety be inferred from their speculations.

Yet if any one may indulge the expectation that his conduct shall be regulated by reason, that may, perhaps, be allowed to the *Recluse*, who has long retired from the world and its busy scenes. From the scorching beams of a mid-day sun, I sought shelter in the deep forest; the fervour of noon is past; and now that I return to the light, the face of nature appears invested with the soberness of evening, and a pleasing calm is diffused all around. In this state of mind, so favourable to thought, so averse to warfare and strife, I appear before the public; anxious to offer my reflections with that candour which is so becoming in every period of life, and so peculiarly proper as it draws towards its close. Such a temper is equally incompatible with the bitterness of invective, or the haughtiness of self-conceit. I return to the world, that great theatre of the passions, like a spirit from the dead. It will become me, therefore, to tread the stage with a dignified composure, and even towards the follies and the vices which I see, to bear my countenance "rather in sorrow than in anger."

THE RECLUSE. No. 6.

Sunt geminæ somni portæ, quarum altera fertur
Cornea, quâ veris facilis datur exitus umbris. VIRGIL.

THOUGH hitherto I cannot boast of having received any great share of public attention, yet in the last eight days I have been honoured with the notice of several correspondents. All of these offer their remarks on my undertaking, and some are so kind as to give me their advice respecting the best manner of conducting it. I am cautioned against being too

grave, an error into which, it is observed, I am disposed to fall; and I am advised to mingle with my more serious dissertations, observations on the lighter shades of manners and fashion. One of my correspondents represents to me the advantages of *dreaming;* an expedient employed with great success by some of the most illustrious of my predecessors, and which, as he justly remarks, may be supposed well-suited to the temper of a recluse. I hold myself particularly obliged to this gentleman, because he has not only given me counsel but example, in the following vision of his own, which he has enclosed for my use. I shall make no apology for inserting it, though it will occupy the space allotted me for two weeks in succession. Who the author is, I presume not to divine; the letter in which it was enclosed had the *post-mark of Chester.*

"As I was passing a month of the delightful summer of 1780 at the ancient seat of my family in North Wales, I one morning awoke, after a disturbed night, soon after daybreak, and the shutters of my windows being open, the light shone on the bed where I lay. Not finding myself disposed to return to sleep, I opened my curtains, and resolved to indulge myself in that listless musing, that half delirium, which is often so grateful to the mind. A sycamore tree, which, according to the tradition of our family, was planted towards the middle of the last century by my great-grandfather, grew on the outside of my window; its branches, driven by the wind, were moving slowly backwards and forwards before the glass, and, in the almost dead stillness around me, I could hear the noise of the breeze passing through its leaves. This tree was an acquaintance of mine from my infancy; but I had never before seen it in so interesting a point of view. The whistling of the wind, the movements of the branches which seemed almost voluntary, and the alternate shades of light and darkness thrown by this movement on the floor, gave it altogether a degree of liveliness which struck me forcibly; and it required but little aid from the imagination to bestow on it consciousness and animation. How old and yet how

vigorous, said I, is this beautiful sycamore! A hundred summers have shed their dews on its leaves, and a hundred more shall witness its unfading verdure; but he that planted it has long ceased to live, and the being that contemplates it shall soon be motionless also. Yet art thou not, O tree, exempt from the laws of decay! thy branches shall wither; thy trunk grow dry and sapless; the matter that forms thee resolve into its parent earth, and mingle with the dust of man over whom thou triumphest! But hast thou indeed a substance, or art thou only a creature of the mind? An hour ago where wert thou? In the arms of sleep I perceived thee not; and how do I know that thou differest in aught from the phantasms of the night which then seemed real? In a few hours hence I shall sleep again as before, and that which seems now a dream shall again become reality. In a few years I shall sleep longer and deeper, and this pillow of down shall be exchanged for a pillow of dust; but who shall say I shall then be senseless? The night of the tomb may present a new scenery before me more beautiful and complete; and when I awake to its enjoyment, I may look back on this 'fev'rous being' as on a turbulent dream! Divine Berkeley! thou second Plato, but greater than the first, how just and sublime were thy views! Mind alone has essence — the forms of matter are but shadows. The whole choir of earth and heaven, what is it — what but a passing vision?

"In this state of mind so favourable to the operations of fancy, the impressions of sense gradually became more indistinct; a dark vapour seemed to spread itself over my eyes, and when my consciousness returned, the following pageant appeared before me: —

"I found myself on the side of a lofty mountain, rising out of the sea, the waves of which dashed against its base. The water was covered with a thin vapour, through which the sight penetrated with difficulty; and the objects on its surface, seen indistinctly, seemed agitated by the heavings of the surge. Casting my eyes behind me, I saw the mountain divide into two branches, which appeared to lose themselves in the

clouds. Between them was a narrow passage, in the front of which stood a being of more than mortal stature. His countenance had the bloom of youth; his eye, which was upon me, shone with divine radiance: in one hand he held a spear, and with the other he beckoned me to approach, with benignant aspect. Wonder and reverence took possession of my heart, and I advanced with humble and hesitating steps. 'Fear nothing,' said he, 'I am the angel Ithuriel, the servant of the Most High: obey me and be instructed. I have strengthened thy sight; turn thy face towards the ocean, and tell me what thou seest.' The clouds which had brooded over the water were rolled away, and the sea was covered with vessels of different sizes, all bending their course towards the mountain where we stood. On board of them I could discern the figures of human beings, sometimes directing the helm or expanding the sails, and at other times resting indolently on the deck, and trusting themselves to the tide. Many of these vessels seemed to enjoy a steady gale, but some were almost becalmed, and others appeared to be tossed and agitated by the violence of the tempest. All, however, approached us, though with different degrees of celerity; the whole being carried forward by a strong current which set towards the shore. While I was about to ask an explanation of what I saw, the angel again addressed me. 'Direct thy view upwards,' said he, 'and contemplate the sky as it hangs over the ocean.' I turned my eye towards the heavens, and saw them illuminated with streaks of light, and with meteors of transcendent beauty shooting from behind the mountain where we stood, across the hemisphere, and tinging the clouds with various colours of celestial hue. I gazed with astonishment and rapture. 'Whence,' said I, 'O inhabitant of heaven! arise those glorious visions, and what do they represent?'—'A portion,' said Ithuriel, 'of the never-ending circle of being is presented before thee in the *tablet of human life*. Thou standest on an isthmus: below thee is the sea of time; behind thee, where thine eye cannot penetrate, the boundless regions of eternity. The

meteors that play on the heavens before thee, are irradiations from objects too luminous for mortal eye, which have penetrated across the dark vapours that overshadow this mountain, and give a faint display of the real beauties of a brighter world. Again reflected from the impending clouds, they are thrown, with diminished lustre, on the surface of the ocean, where they assume a thousand unsubstantial forms. It is these phantoms which they mistake for realities, that thy fellow mortals are pursuing: thy sight is farther strengthened; observe them more narrowly, and tell me what thou seest.'—'I see,' said I, 'the countenances of those who are advancing on the water, agitated by various passions; and I can discern some of the objects which attract them, and which appear to dance before them on the billows as they approach. In their direct course, I can discern a mighty whirlpool, towards which all the waters of the sea seem to flow; and the vessels are carried along by the power of its vortex.'—'The whirlpool which thou observest,' said Ithuriel, 'is the termination of mortal life; the innumerable tribes that cover the surface of the ocean must be all swallowed up in its abyss. Many, thou mayst see, that are on the brink of fate, are stored with provisions for a long voyage. How vain is their solicitude! their barks and their ladings shall perish in the gulf, and they themselves be cast up naked on the shore.'

THE RECLUSE. No. 8.

Umbrarum hic locus. VIRGIL.

"WHILE the angel was yet speaking, I could discern the headmost vessel fast approaching the whirlpool: on the deck sat a man with contented air, and dull but placid countenance. His vessel was deeply laden, and moved evenly on the tide.

He appeared unconscious of his danger, his attention being engaged by the figure of a palace in front, resembling, as far as I could discern, the Mansion House in London. As he got up, seemingly with the intention of preparing to enter it, he discovered the gulf immediately before him; and, starting with agony and terror, instantly disappeared.

"After him followed several others of the same description. Their vessels were in general laden with different articles of merchandize; but some were ballasted with gold and silver; and others, to my surprise, were deeply pressed down in the water, though their lading seemed to consist only of thin pieces of paper of an oblong form. Some of these persons seemed to be entirely employed in gazing on their cargoes; but others appeared to have objects at some distance in their view, on which their attention was fixed. Amongst these last, I could observe a man of an open and ingenuous appearance, but with a face marked with anxiety and care. The vessel under him seemed to have been buffetted by the storms, and rolled much in the water. He kept his place, however, steadily at the helm, with an air of fortitude in his countenance, which seemed at times clouded with pain, but more frequently enlightened with comfort. He discovered the abyss at some distance before him; and, folding his arms, resigned himself to his fate with composure and magnanimity. When on the verge of the whirlpool, I saw him lying backward, with the air and attitude of one that sleeps.

"The next vessel that followed was a canoe, in one end of which sat a man of reddish hue. His body was almost naked, and his face was painted of different colours. On his head he wore a crown of variegated feathers, and in his hand he carried a bow. His countenance was sometimes agitated with keen emotion, and sometimes lethargic and dull. As he approached the whirlpool, he rose erect in his canoe; and, with eyes fixed on the gulf before him, sunk undaunted under the waves.

"A great variety of beings succeeded, most of whom seemed

unconscious of the fate that awaited them; but some discerned the abyss at a distance, and endeavoured to steer a different course. They were able to hold a direction somewhat oblique; but the power of the vortex soon overcame their efforts, and sucked them under the tide.

"While I contemplated the immense crowd that was rushing forward, I saw a vessel advancing, that engaged my particular observation. It seemed extremely light, and violently agitated by the winds, which blew, in succession, in various directions. On the deck sat a man, whose hair hung loose on the breeze, and whose temples were covered with leaves of bay. He held a harp before him, on which he seemed to play; and his countenance bespoke a mind agitated by lofty conceptions. Of the storm he appeared altogether heedless; his eye glanced alternately on the surface of the ocean and the convexity of the sky; and I could discover a beam of light, reflected from the heavens, that played on his head. In this situation a sudden blast overset his bark, and he was tumbled into the sea. He was, however, able to get on the inverted keel; and I could discover that he still preserved his harp. At times he resumed his employment with the same air of unconcern as formerly; but he was frequently interrupted by the rolling of the vessel; and he was generally half immersed in the water. A few of the notes he struck, I could hear; they were exquisitely melodious, and seemed to brighten the sorrow of his countenance with an expression of elevation and hope. My heart was drawn towards this unfortunate being; but while I was musing on his condition, I perceived that he also had reached the termination of his voyage, and had sunk, like the rest, into the inevitable gulf.

"My eye again wandered at large over the surface of the water, when a new object engaged my attention. In the prow of a bark that advanced with great rapidity, I saw a young man standing in a military garb: his port was noble, his aspect commanding, and his look was directed, with the utmost animation and ardour, towards a phantom immediately before him. The colours in which this spectre was pour-

trayed were so vivid as to be distinctly visible. The figure seemed that of a beautiful female, in the dress of an Amazon; one hand was laid across her breast, and with the other she pointed upwards. The farther the warrior advanced, the greater appeared his eagerness; and his visage seemed to grow pale and sicken with the anxiety of his mind. But the instant he reached the gulf, his eye sparkled, his cheek flushed; he sprang forward, with extended arms, to catch the beauteous phantom, which burst in his embrace with a flash of light that illuminated his countenance, as he sunk under the waves, and diffused a splendour across the ocean, far and wide!

"The surprise and admiration which this produced had no sooner subsided, than a vessel attracted my notice, of a superior size. On the deck stood a man in the dress of a senator. His stature was tall, his attitude graceful and majestic: though his hair was whitened with age, his countenance had the energy of youth, and his eye seemed to brighten with unquenchable fire. He looked around him with an air of authority and command; and I could observe that his fellow-voyagers within his view gazed on him with awe and reverence. The vessel seemed to move proudly under him, the waves curling and foaming against her stem. As he approached the brink of the whirlpool, he stepped forward in the attitude of one that speaks; and, raising his hand above his head, in high emotion, he suddenly staggered forward, as if struck with lightning, and tumbled headlong into the gulf! The noise of his fall, which seemed like the fall of a colossus, reached me distinctly; and the waves appeared to recoil all around!

"While I was lost in sorrow and wonder, the voice of the angel again saluted me. 'Grieve not,' said he, 'for what thou hast seen. The Eternal Spirit, whose creatures we are, penetrates all nature, and is equally present in the depths and darkness of the ocean, as in the brightness of the summer's day. The beings that are lost to thy sight are yet under his protection, and shall again emerge with renovated powers.

They are spirits like thyself, emanations of the Supreme Spirit; and, after a course of action and suffering, a part of which thou hast seen, shall again be united to the source from whence they sprung. Human life is a single scene in the great drama of existence. Earth, O mortal! is the school of minds! When thou minglest in its cares and its pleasures, remember thy origin and thy destination: let thy heart be purified from baseness and vice, and bear thyself with the temper of an immortal. But look again on the ocean, and direct thine eyes towards the north.' I obeyed. On the verge of the horizon, a small vessel appeared bounding through the waves. As it moved along, I could discern a man standing on the deck with a pencil in his hand. His attention was employed on the vessels that were passing before him; and he seemed busy in recording their fate as they successively disappeared. But of his own vessel he appeared to take no care or direction; and he did not seem conscious that he himself was rapidly borne along by the tide. I gazed on him by a secret sympathy. As he approached more nearly, a sudden thought struck me — alas! I knew his features, though I had never seen them *but in a mirror*. Confusion, surprise, and terror took possession of my mind. But as I saw this image approach the gulf, my eyes became dim; a thousand half-formed shadows danced before my sight, clouds and darkness gathered around, the vision melted away, and I found myself lying on my bed in the old castle of B——, by the bay of Caernarvon, with the sunbeams playing on my face."

APPENDIX, No. VI. Page 337.

ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN OF THE ATHENÆUM AT LIVERPOOL.

(Communicated by Dr. Rutter.)

Previously to the year 1797, the only news-room of any importance in Liverpool, was a large room belonging to the hotel at the bottom of Lord Street, at that time the principal inn. This hotel was much frequented by strangers, who came to town on business, and by officers passing to and from Ireland. The news-room was constantly so much crowded by these strangers, that the subscribers could not avail themselves of the privilege, to which they alone were entitled, of perusing the newspapers; at a time, too, when public events had become deeply interesting to every individual in the empire.

About two years before the period above mentioned, the late Mr. Edward Rogers of this town, a gentleman well known, and very highly and deservedly respected, happened to be at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and was much struck with an establishment which he had seen there, upon a plan somewhat similar to the Athenæum, but more comprehensive in its objects; and on his return, he mentioned to the late Mr. Thomas Taylor and to me, how desirable it would be to form a somewhat similar establishment here, with a view to remedy, effectually, the inconveniences above alluded to. There did not appear at that time to be any rational prospect of succeeding in such an undertaking. We, however, never lost sight of the subject, but mentioned it repeatedly to our mutual friends, in order to ascertain their opinions as to the probability of success. In the mean time, the inconveniences in the room in Lord Street became so great, and excited so much dissatisfaction, that we at length determined to ascer-

tain whether it might not be practicable to establish a news-room elsewhere, and to combine a library along with it.

In the first place, we sought for a suitable and central situation; and soon fixed upon a piece of vacant land in Church Street, upon which the Athenæum was subsequently erected. Mr. Taylor procured from the late Mr. John Foster a plan and elevation of a building adapted to that ground; and I drew up a prospectus, explaining the particular objects and purposes of the proposed institution. These documents were shown to different gentlemen, who highly approved of them; and, in consequence, we requested four of these gentlemen to meet us, in order to take the subject into consideration; viz. Mr. Roscoe, the late Dr. Currie, the late Mr. William Clarke, banker, and Mr. Joshua Lace. All these gentlemen met us at the Theatre Tavern, Williamson Square, on the 22d of November, 1797, except Dr. Currie, who was prevented from attending by professional engagements. At this meeting, the plan and elevation were carefully examined and approved; the prospectus was read and also approved; and it was thought desirable to ascertain whether the projected institution were likely to meet with public support. No formal resolutions were entered into at this meeting, nor was any thing committed to writing; but, as a preliminary measure, the meeting directed 500 copies of the prospectus to be immediately printed and distributed amongst the most respectable inhabitants. I was requested to see this measure executed, and it was done without delay.

After this meeting, many respectable gentlemen were consulted with respect to the practicability of carrying the project into effect, who promised to give it all the assistance in their power. Amongst others, it was submitted to the consideration of George Case, Esq., who warmly encouraged it, and to whose personal attention and influence the institution was afterwards indebted for many important benefits.

After the distribution of the prospectus, the scheme met with such encouragement, that a public meeting of the friends to it was summoned. This meeting was held on the 27th of

November, 1797; and at this meeting the late Dr. Currie presided. The plan and elevation were then produced; some alterations were proposed to be made in them; and the meeting concluded their proceedings by appointing a committee to carry the plan into effect. Books were opened to receive the names of subscribers; and, in a very short time, the number proposed, 350 was filled up, and subsequently increased to 500, the present number.

It is not necessary to enter into any further details respecting the future proceedings of the subscribers; but it may be useful, and it is not more useful than proper, to remark, that the establishment of this institution, at the period in question, was incidentally productive of much good in this town. At no other period has party-spirit raged with more vehemence; yet the establishment of the Athenæum, whilst it promised to provide the inhabitants with such literary resources as they had not before possessed, had the effect of bringing into active co-operation, for a common object, a number of gentlemen, whose opinions on political subjects widely differed; and who, greatly to their honour, laid aside all such differences, and acted together with the utmost harmony.

St. Anne Street,
Liverpool, September 2. 1829.

APPENDIX, No. VII. Page 414.

DRAMATIC CRITICISM.

CHARACTER OF MR. HENDERSON.

By Dr. Currie.

The loss sustained by the public by the death of Mr. Henderson, will not be easily estimated, and it will be most sincerely lamented by his admirers in this town.

As a performer he was without an equal, and his excel-

lences were of a kind to redound most highly to his praise. He obtained the first honours of his profession under disadvantages which nothing but superior talents could have overcome. His person was not striking, nor were his features interesting; he had nothing in his appearance to excite, at first sight, that surprise and admiration which conciliate favour, and prejudice judgment. His excellences were of the most solid kind; they depended on a mind gifted with wonderful powers of feeling, and with powers of expression equally wonderful. It may be said of him without danger of contradiction, that in the excellences of his performance, he far excelled any actor living; and in the compass of his execution, that he greatly surpassed any that has ever lived. His superiority over his contemporaries indeed may be asserted, not only in general, but in particular. Who is there can say that in any of his comic parts there is any actor living that rivalled him? or that he had an equal in any of his tragic characters, if a single exception be made in favour of the Shylock of Macklin? Of the superior compass of his talents, not only to all present, but to all past actors, the proof is easy: we have only to recollect that he was the lineal successor of almost all the first performers of the last age. He followed Quin, in Falstaff; Woodward, in Bobadil; Macklin, in Shylock; Mossop, in Zanga; Diggs, in Wolsey; Barry, in Evander; and Garrick, in Richard, Lear, Benedict, Sir John Brute, and almost all his other characters.

His performances displayed a correct taste, and a judgment at once minute and comprehensive: he was equally successful in his copies of nature, whether he shot the arrow of ridicule, or the bolt of humour; whether he stormed in the whirlwind of passion, or sunk under the pressure of sorrow and the weakness of age. In every part his dominion over the feelings of others was uniform. He could excite the play of wit, he could make the eye swim in laughter, he could draw forth the high-wrought tear of heroic admiration, or the softer drops of sympathetic woe. By some, perhaps by the public in general, his comedy was preferred to his

tragedy; but the justice of this verdict may be disputed: certainly, his principal characters in tragedy might be considered as superlative exertions of the art: of late he had wonderfully extended his range in this department of the drama, and always with a new increase of reputation. He played Pierre (in which he first appeared on the theatre in this town, to Mrs. Siddons's Belvidera in the summer of 1782,) in a manner exceeding the expectations of his warmest admirers; and his Horatio, the last character in which he came forward, was spoken of by the critics of Covent Garden theatre in the highest terms of eulogy which the language can supply. If, then, his comedy had any advantage over his tragedy, it arose solely from his exterior being less fitted to the latter. He had not the heroic stature, the *os sublime*, with which fancy invests the votaries of Melpomene, nor had his figure that elegance which, as we are told by an admired female writer, marks the character which is fitted to make woman false. He, therefore, never attempted the lover; and perhaps it was owing to this that he never rose to that degree of popularity amongst the fairer part of the creation which some very inferior performers have attained. How far this might influence his fame, those will best judge who know the sex best. Their zeal in the interest of a favourite is great in proportion to their sensibility, and their influence in society we know has increased, and is increasing to a degree which their admirers must behold with wonder and delight! With the leave, however, of those fair arbiters of taste and merit, we may venture to say, that there is no character more generally insipid than that of the lover in the English drama; and if Henderson personated no part of that kind, he thereby escaped the mortification of spouting sentiments in which feeling and nature are usually sacrificed to wild unmeaning bombast. Of his excellence, however, in parts of tenderness, numerous instances might be offered, but none is wanted by those who saw his Evander on this stage, and who felt it predominated over the Euphrasia of lofty Siddons.

Mr. Henderson's comedy has been long and greatly praised; his performance of Falstaff alone was sufficient to place him in the first rank of actors. In this part he had neither equal nor competitor, and it does not appear where he is to have a successor. Falstaff was the favourite offspring of Shakspeare's brain; he had no prototype, and he has had no copy.

To give a striking picture of this original is undoubtedly one of the most difficult attempts of the mimic art. It was here that Henderson shone with superior lustre; and his performance of the fat Knight has been long considered by the best judges as the greatest triumph of the comic muse.

From what has been said, it may be concluded that Mr. Henderson chiefly excelled in that which is the chief excellence of an actor, the talent of speaking. His recitation was clear and distinct, and his emphasis uniformly pointed and correct. By great quickness and accuracy of apprehension, by deep acquaintance with human nature, by much study, and by long practice, he had caught the exact tone in which nature expresses the feelings and passions in all their variety of combination. By these powers he unfolded the sentiments and the beauties of his author with a perspicuous energy, to which nothing equal has appeared in the present age.

The works of Shakspeare are particularly adapted to this style of speaking, because they are thick-sown with sentiments of which he best displays the beauty, who makes the meaning most clearly understood. By such means Henderson was enabled to keep up the attention of an audience through many of the longest soliloquies of our immortal bard, which inferior actors had attempted in vain. It was his praise to have followed Shakspeare through a much greater range of characters than even Garrick himself: he not only gave copies of his more prominent delineations, but of those which lie more out of the line of common apprehension. He caught the fleeting shades of genius in all their various forms, as they are exhibited in the fantastic

Benedict, the moralising Jaques, or the melancholy Hamlet. In private life, Mr. Henderson's character was highly amiable; he has left the reputation of an affectionate husband and father, of a generous friend, and of an honest man. Of his social qualities it is needless to speak: it is well known in this town how greatly he excelled in his convivial hours, in all that could please the taste or delight the fancy, talents for which he was admired by many of the first characters of the present day, and by which he was often enabled to diffuse a gleam of joy over the mind of Johnson, when weakness and melancholy had oppressed his age. The death of Henderson, in the prime of life and in the meridian of fame and fortune, may be allowed to affect those deeply who loved the man, and admired the actor; nor let any man think it below him to feel sorrow on this occasion. Superior merit in every station of life is highly deserving of honour, and will receive it largely from the enlightened mind, which considers all distinctions as vain and worthless that are not founded on genius and virtue. Even they who feel nothing for others may not find themselves uninterested. Death itself is a serious subject; and the dreams of vanity and pride must dissolve like the fabric of a vision, when we contemplate the prospect of futurity and the voyage to that country "from whose bourn no traveller returns."

Liverpool, December 1. 1785.

(*Published originally in the European Magazine.*)

CRITIQUE ON MR. KEMBLE IN ZANGA.

Liverpool, June 27. 1789.

To the Printer of the Weekly Herald.

SIR,

I have always been a lover of the drama, and a critic in dramatic representation. I had an early partiality for that species of entertainment, which presents, in a living picture, the

fairest offspring of genius, and which illustrates, with so much beauty, the sympathies of the human heart. My residence, at present, is in this town, and my chief amusement is the theatre. I make many remarks on the performers; old men, you know, have a pleasure in remarking. You shall have from time to time a few of my observations, which you may insert in the *Herald*, when it is not more profitably engaged. What I have now to offer shall be confined to the

Revenge.

This play, as it is one of the earliest, so it is, without doubt, the happiest production of Young. The plot is regular, the unities are preserved, the sentiments and language are highly poetical, the characters are clearly delineated, and that of Zanga is pourtrayed with a strength of expression and colouring which rank it with the highest efforts of the tragic muse. Nevertheless, there has been always found a difficulty in sustaining it on the stage. The plot and characters have been said to resemble too closely those in the Moor of Venice; but this is not the only cause of the difficulty: a slight comparison will show that, though there is a general resemblance, there are many essential differences between them; and the originality of the Revenge stands on as fair ground as that of any other dramas which are every season presented before us. The truth is, there is too little diversity in the play of Young. From the beginning to the end *one* strain of thought is prevalent; the mind cannot disengage itself for a moment from the fell purposes of the unrelenting Zanga, and the dark forebodings of his bloody revenge. Hence the attention, deeply excited at first, grows fatigued and exhausted, and seeks relief in vain in lighter objects. How much better this is managed by Shakspeare, those will perceive who examine his tragedies. The scenes of common life and humour, which almost all of them contain, have been loudly exclaimed against; but it would be easy to show that they augment the pathos of the whole: they are not permitted by Aristotle, and they are condemned by Voltaire; but Nature and Shakspeare are greater than they.

The opening of the Revenge is singularly noble, and was finely represented on the stage. From the moment that Mr. Kemble appeared, it was evident that he had the true conception of his character. His dress, his aspect, and figure, were all perfectly adapted to his part. He had the firm tread and strong demeanour of the savage but heroic Zanga, with which his voice and utterance entirely corresponded. The favourable impression made in the first scene he preserved throughout the play. He was in general forcible and energetic; he was sometimes refined and subtle, and he was often terrible and sublime. It would be easy to point out various proofs of these different excellences; but this would lead to too long a detail. A more graceful or more animated representation of this dark, fierce, and powerful character is neither to be expected nor wished. So much for praise. But the Drury-lane manager must not get off here; indiscriminate applause is the bane of genius, and ought not to be listened to. It is by the honesty of censure only that we can know praise to be sincere. Though Mr. Kemble's performance was, on the whole, very noble, it was not uniformly correct. There was, in several instances, too strong a colouring, and in one or two an apparent misconception. He has a strength in his features which no disguise of paint can hide, and with which he cannot be so well acquainted as his audience. Even when his face is sooty, there is fierceness in his forehead, and a scowl in his eye, equal to the expression of any emotion of scorn or hatred; and when to these is added a ghastly grin, it is too terrible. On this subject, however, tastes may differ. It will be better discussed in future, in speaking of his character as a performer; but that in one or two instances he sacrificed strict propriety to show, he himself will, perhaps, admit. In the first scene, where he discovered to Isabella his hatred of Alonzo, the expression should no doubt be forcible; but force may be conveyed in the lower notes of the voice. Here a *secret* is told, deliberately told; surely it should not be conveyed in such a tone as to be heard in the streets! With such advantages of countenance and manner, Mr. Kemble

is, of all men, most inexcusable, when he resorts unnecessarily to noise for the sake of impression. That the sacrifice of truth and nature to glare and show may often be approved by the bad taste of the more ignorant part of an audience, is no excuse to *him*. An actor of established and unrivalled reputation should not feed on vulgar praise; instead of encouraging error, he should endeavour to reform it. It is, however, fair to acknowledge, that these remarks detract but little from the performance of Zanga; they are more applicable to some of his other characters.

As one instance of misconception has been given, let it be contrasted with one other of distinguished excellence. The address to the prophet was peculiarly great; the utterance the action, the attitude, were all surpassing, and presented a picture at once so true, so graceful, and so impressive, as the finest flights of Mrs. Siddons have never, perhaps, excelled.

On the subject of grace, it may be remarked, that the drapery of the female figure gives an actress a great advantage on the stage over a male performer. This advantage, however, does not hold over Mr. Kemble in the dress of Zanga, which was flowing and elegant: the opening which displayed the neck and breast had a fine effect. With his head turned a little to one side, and at rest, the actor recalled to the memory one of those classic busts which convey to present times the form and features of the heroes of ancient Rome. On the other hand, in the warmth of soliloquy, Mr. Kemble's appearance suggested the idea that he had lately been reading the sublime ode of Smollett, where, in the character of a savage, the poet addresses Independence in the following noble lines: —

> Thy spirit, Independence, let me share,
> Lord of the lion-heart and eagle eye;
> Thy steps I follow with my *bosom bare*,
> Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky.

I fear I have already detained you too long; and I hasten to bid you adieu.

PHILO-MUSA.

APPENDIX, No. VIII.

SKETCH OF A SERMON, PREACHED IN LIVERPOOL IN THE YEAR 1794,

By the Rev. Joseph Berington, Author of the History of Henry II., and of the Lives of Abeillard and Eloisa, &c. &c. *

LAST Sunday, as I was going up Hanover Street, I overtook a group of females who were walking before me. My movement was a little, and but a little, quicker than theirs, and I found it would be less inconvenient to slacken my pace, so as to keep behind, than to make the effort necessary to pass them. Thus circumstanced, I could not avoid overhearing their conversation, and I found they were going to the Catholic Chapel in Seel Street, where a stranger was to preach, — an odd sort of a person, who was very learned, for he had written several books. This account excited my curiosity: I followed the party insensibly, and entering the place of worship after them, I seated myself in an empty pew, and composed my thoughts to the solemnity of the occasion. Though I had often been in Catholic churches, both at home and abroad, yet I was attracted by the splendour and the ceremonials of the worship, which led me at times into involuntary musings on the advantages that result from making the senses auxiliaries in our devotion, by the additional force with which the mind is impressed. These reflections were, however, checked by a consideration of the danger of the practice to a being who, like man, is so prone to mistake the shadow for the substance, whose religion so quickly degenerates into superstition, and whose superstition is so fatal

* This venerable ecclesiastic, who for the last thirty-five years had resided at Buckland, as Chaplain to Sir John Throckmorton, died about two years ago, at an advanced old age. — *Editor.*

to virtue and to happiness. The subject required more thought than I had time to give it, for my meditations were interrupted by the stranger's entering the pulpit, and by a certain buzz of expectation which spread through the congregation. He seemed of the middle age, with an air of candour and gravity; he addressed his audience with the most striking simplicity, and proposed as his text the words of our Saviour: "Hereby shall men know you to be my disciples, if you love one another."

Before he had proceeded many sentences, I found we were to hear an original discourse, and that from no common man. His language, though unornamented, was precise and perspicuous, his general division was clear, and his thoughts followed each other in that seemingly artless, yet regular, order which is so beautiful to the eye of a nice observer, and which is perhaps the surest criterion of a superior mind. There was this singularity about him, that he had no sermon before him. He was properly a speaker, not a reader, and the matter which he delivered, but for its arrangement and its excellence, might have been supposed to come from him without premeditation. The freedom acquired by his eye being unconfined, he did not however use for the purpose of gesticulation. He was entirely free from the theatrical foppery of the coxcomb on the one hand, and the swelling solemnity of the pedant on the other. Sometimes standing upright, and sometimes leaning forward, he addressed his hearers in the tones of conversation: serious, fervent, and unaffected, he delivered in the accents of persuasion the dictates of truth.

The sentiments uttered by this superior preacher, were no less striking than his manner, and still more interesting. He told us, that though all the truths unfolded in Revelation demanded our serious attention, yet there was a difference in the degree of their importance, founded not only on the nature of man, but on the providence of our Great Parent; that the truths, which applied to human conduct, were

most essential, appeared not only from their immediate influence on our virtue and happiness, but from their being revealed in such express terms that they neither had been, nor could be, misapprehended, while those doctrines which were objects of faith only were frequently involved in mystery and obscurity. To deny this assertion was therefore to impeach the wisdom or the benevolence of the Supreme. In this view, he said, it would be found that the principle of love or benevolence was the *most striking* feature of Christianity, that which was held out as the *criterion* of its influence by the Author of our faith and his immediate disciples, that which was *most* calculated to promote our happiness in this life, to prepare us *most directly* for the society of a better world, and more immediate communication with the God of love.

If, then, said he, such be the leading principles of Christianity, and such its influence, whence has it arisen that Christians have been so *singularly* distinguished by their animosity to each other, and that the history of their dissensions should be remarkable *above all others* for deeds of hatred and of death? Because weak man has reversed the order of his Maker, has brought forward articles which relate merely to faith, and held them out as of *most* importance; on points which Almighty Wisdom had involved in clouds and darkness, has undertaken to decide not only for himself, but for others; dictating to his fellow-men the counsels of Heaven, has considered their doubts wicked and impious; and, rushing forward in his frantic career, has attempted to control the laws of the human mind, has burst asunder the holy bonds of brotherhood and love, and too often stained the altars of God with the blood of his creatures!

These observations the preacher enforced by many clear illustrations, and afterwards proceeded to apply them to the present times.

Though actual persecution for conscience-sake was now in a great measure unknown, yet the spirit was not extinct. Bigots of every description were still anxious to distinguish themselves by the peculiarities of their faith, rather than by

the charity of their opinions and conduct; and the prevailing sect in almost every country was still disposed to support its doctrines by exclusive establishments, sometimes to fortify them by the monopoly of civil offices, and sometimes by penal laws on different modes of faith. How much better for the magistrate to confine his views to the intercourse of man with man, and to leave the intercourse of man with God to the Great Searcher of hearts!

The preacher went on to make the application of his observations to the congregation before him, and the sect to which they belonged. Disclaiming, in their name, the tenet that supposes the mercy of God confined to *their* mode of faith, he cautioned them against believing that faith only, however pure, gave any peculiar claim to it. He advised them to consider men of every persuasion, who led a life of virtue and piety, as their brethren, and as partaking equally the protection and the favour of Heaven. "Parent of men," said the eloquent preacher, "thou hast given us a law of love, and we have forgotten it; thou hast revealed the precepts of universal charity, and we have divided ourselves into narrow and persecuting sects. O may we soon return to a knowledge of thy truth; and hatred, malice, and uncharitableness be banished from the earth!"

APPENDIX, No. IX. Page 401.

STATEMENT OF DR. CURRIE'S POLITICAL LIFE.

(Dictated at Sidmouth in his last illness.)

I was by disposition and education a monarchist, in opposition to a republican, and, in fact, my abstract sentiments corresponded pretty nearly with those which form the principle of the British constitution, freed from its obvious abuses and corruptions. I had, like most of my countrymen,

a strong attachment, not merely to a part, but to the whole, of the United Kingdoms, and was prone to take the side of the nation, where her conduct or her fortunes were at issue. I had, at an early period of life, become acquainted with the society of the Thirteen Colonies of America while the revolutionary war was impending, and had, in common with the rest of my countrymen, been exposed to the vulgar prejudices and hatreds which such commotions in society serve to engender and to inflame. I was fortunate enough to withdraw myself from the agitations of America without taking any part in them, and resumed the study of my profession at Edinburgh in my twenty-first year, soon after the war broke out. I shall here say nothing of my medical studies, of which some records remain, and which the rapid flight of the passing moment does not admit of being discussed completely, confining myself to my political character only, in which I acquired more celebrity than commonly falls to the lot of one, the usual course of whose studies, and the tenour of whose way, had been so remote from public life, and also incurred some misrepresentation, which is not yet wholly corrected.

Being of a contemplative and speculative turn of mind, and associating at college with persons of the same description, living moreover at a period of society fertile in extraordinary events, in their consequences destined to produce others of a still more extraordinary nature, it was impossible for me not to feel a strong sympathy in the extraordinary events of my own times. I never, indeed, came to view the guilt of England in the contest with America, comparatively speaking, in so serious a light as many did; nothing seemed to me more natural than such a contest: but of its folly I was soon convinced, and heartily rejoiced in the peace concluded by Lord Shelburne, which, being in the spirit of peace, gave a prospect of re-establishing, for a time at least, the tranquillity of the world. In the party agitations that followed, I was for several years a great admirer of Mr. Pitt, and did not wholly withdraw myself from this attachment

till his military interference with the French Revolution, of the danger of which I seemed to myself to have a more early and serious impression than most of my contemporaries. Never, however, having written any thing on politics, a few newspaper squibs in early life excepted, it is most probable that I should never have thought of appearing, directly or indirectly, before the public on this subject, had it not been for the circumstances now to be mentioned.

Liverpool, from the nature of its commerce, was more than usually interested in those eloquent agitations on the subject of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, which took place in the British Parliament in the early stages of the French Revolution, under auspices so apparently favourable. Habit and interest more than counteracted the spirit of abolition in Liverpool, but we were by no means unanimous on the question. Perhaps, if the balance has been fairly struck, the numbers were on the side of the Abolition, and property and influence on the other.

I lived in a small circle of literary friends in Liverpool, remarkable for a prompt discussion and open declaration of their opinions on public questions, and, in a very little while, almost all these had declared themselves in favour of the Abolition. In the progress of the repeated discussions, points of individual evidence, as well as more general statements, were controverted in the Houses of Parliament: the truth respecting these was often probably known in Liverpool; but in a place so generally interested and agitated on this subject, the usual channels of information might on these points be less pure or less easy of access. Circumstances of this kind produced an occasional intercourse by letter between a gentleman distinguished by his support of the cause of the Negroes and myself, in which he thought my professsonal opinions might promote, not obstruct, a proper judgment, and on which occasions I endeavoured invariably to pay homage to truth and justice. Unfortunately the great questions of political happiness agitated in those days were all in one way or other swallowed up in the volcano of

the French Revolution. The African Slave Trade may be said to have shared this fate, though connected with it by coincidence of time and passion, not of nature or principle. The war of 1793 came; a fearful crisis to the lovers of true freedom and the friends of their species. Good men differed as to the path of justice and safety to be pursued. For my own part, I never had a moment's doubt that the war was to be shunned, if it could be shunned with external safety, of which, with reasonable care and temper in Government, there seemed no cause to entertain a doubt. Under the same conditions, there seemed to me much greater chance of our internal institutions being strengthened than dissolved by the fiery ordeal. The war came on so suddenly and unexpectedly, as I have reason to believe, in some of the highest quarters, that several of its most obvious consequences had not been foreseen. The commercial difficulties and bankruptcies which immediately ensued, excited, therefore, a general alarm among the ministry, as likely to make the nation discontented with hostile measures. Circumstances of a contrary nature, almost equally unexpected, had ensued likewise: these were the extraordinary celerity and success with which the French were driven out of Holland and Flanders, and by which the original declared purposes of the league against them had been obtained far earlier than was in contemplation. Discredit and disgrace had fallen equally upon the arms and the politics of France, and their political crimes especially revolted every feeling of honour and humanity.

A new crisis had therefore arisen; — circumstances had occurred to indispose our commercial nation to a continuation of hostilities, while out of those very hostilities themselves, and the political crimes of our adversaries, other circumstances had arisen to put peace upon honourable terms in our power.

The decision of this question was to be settled, as it was said, by a deputation to Antwerp from all the allies; and if a

fundamental arrangement of French affairs should be decided upon, nothing less was requisite than to have the whole power of France first reduced to the obedience of the Allies. How many obstacles of every kind, moral and physical, appeared to oppose the success of such an attempt! How fatal a determination would it be for Britain to embark in such an enterprise! How much more safe, more glorious, and more just a path was in our power!

It was the object of the pamphlet, which came out under the signature of Jasper Wilson, to support this side of the question, at a time when the torrent of the press was almost wholly in the opposite direction. The author wished to conceal his real name, for reasons easily understood by those who reflect on his own vulnerable situation, on the character of the times, and the peculiar use made of private slander as an instrument in support of administration. He chose to give it a name, for the sake of designation; for the press teemed at that moment with pamphlets on the war, the greater part anonymous, and therefore with difficulty distinguished by purchasers.

The letter of Jasper Wilson met with unexpected notice. To this several causes might contribute: it was originally written, without any view to publication, to a gentleman of leading consequence in parliament, in the form of two distinct letters; the first being confined to the question of how far the commercial distresses which had succeeded to the war, were fairly to be imputed to that event, — a subject, strange to say, strongly contested at that moment; the second, how far the example of former periods of society, the nature of the human mind, and the extraordinary successes which had attended the commencement of hostilities on our part, would justify the confidence expressed by Ministry of the ultimate success of disciplined Europe in the contest against France, should it be pursued to the uttermost. These letters were written, so far as I remember, in April and May 1793; they made a strong impression on

the party to whom they were directed, and an intimation having been given from that quarter of the pleasure that would be received by a personal interview with the writer, this and other circumstances led him to make a journey, about the middle of May, from Liverpool to London, where ample and candid discussions took place on these important questions.

The nature of my engagements limited my stay in the metropolis; and soon after my return I had authentic information that the last proposition of Le Brun or of Brissot, I forget which, was likely to be rejected, and the die finally cast for war. Perhaps, if a man had been determined to publish at all, it would have been better to have published earlier; but something might still be done, and as copies of my two letters were before me, I sat down to new arrange them on the 24th of May, and the pamphlet was on the counters of the booksellers in London on the 8th or 10th of June. The composition was not much altered in any respect, and to the ease and warmth of the expressions, arising in part from the private nature of the original form, I always imputed some portion of its popularity.

Far be it from me, even if time were permitted to me, to attempt a justification, or even an estimate, of all the moral, commercial, and political principles contained in this pamphlet; but this I will say, under circumstances of the most awful nature, that it was written with the purest motives, and under impulses of mind of the most powerful and serious kind. Commercially speaking, it is inferior in authority to what it merits in a political and moral view, in both of which respects, I solemnly declare that, a liberal interpretation being given to a few warm expressions, I recollect nothing that I now wish to alter.

Various answers came out to this pamphlet on the part of the friends and retainers of Administration, the most popular of which were those of Mr. Vansittart and Mr. George Chalmers; the first written in the spirit and manner of a gentleman; the second, in that sort of style so peculiar to the

author, with which the world has since become familiar. Of Mr. Vansittart's work I shall say nothing, and very little of that of Mr. Chalmers. They have been before the public, and will no doubt be preserved in their proper archives; but in regard to the spirit, temper, and manner of Mr. Chalmers' composition, it is necessary for me to offer a few remarks.

The pamphlet of Jasper Wilson being written, in spirit and in truth, with great respect for the principles and institutions of our Government, deprived its adversaries of an advantage which was too frequently given by the advocates of peace in their deplorable impetuosity and folly. To deprive him of this advantage incidentally was, perhaps, a *ruse de guerre* of Mr. C. Hence appeared to me the extraordinary appearance of familiarity and vulgar intimacy, in which his composition is involved. This gave a colour to insinuations constantly thrown out, that my attachment to the constitution was different from what I had assumed, and that I was in truth what in those days was called a Jacobin in disguise. Every thing of the nature of controversy with Mr. Chalmers was necessarily odious, otherwise I might easily have deprived him of all authority on this point. My acquaintance with Mr. C. was limited to the following particulars, which had occurred in the year 1784, previous to the interesting events that had now engrossed the attention and the sympathies of all Europe, and gave a new aspect to almost every individual's character and conduct: — In the year 1784 I met Mr. Chalmers at dinner in the house of my friend Mr. B. of Duke Street. It was said he had been a lawyer or attorney in America, that he enjoyed the patronage of Lord Hawkesbury (now Earl of Liverpool), and that he was collecting materials for one of the editions of his Comparative Estimate. I was not unacquainted with the first edition of that work, and thought favourably of the talents and industry displayed. Mr. C. and I fell into conversation, and finding there were several topics respecting the population and trade of Liverpool that had attracted his notice, and in which I also felt the interest of a citizen, I invited him before we parted,

to dine with me next day at my house in York Street, when I had a few friends, more or less interested in such topics, to meet him. The day passed off amicably and cheerfully, and we parted with mutual good will. Mr. C. was not indeed a man to my taste in a general point of view, though apparently a man of considerable strength of power and of application; and being well advanced in years, one moreover who was said to have tasted of misfortunes, and to have made sacrifices for his attachment to his political principles in America, he had several claims to respect and good wishes. From this time forth I have never seen Mr. Chalmers again, except once in a large company in Liverpool about the year 1791 or 1792, into which I was asked to meet him at dinner, with a party of the principal African merchants of the town. I did not go to dinner on account of some professional engagements, but in the afternoon called in, when, finding Mr. C. in the midst of a long and detailed account of his services in defeating a late attempt in Parliament for the abolition of the African trade, I paid my compliments to him personally, and to the company present, and speedily took my leave. The truth was, that my sentiments on the nature of this question were universally known to the gentlemen present, several of whom were my personal friends, not to correspond with those delivered by Mr. Chalmers; and though my presence might not prevent the discourse from going on, it might in several respects be embarrassing.

In consequence of this interview, I, however, learned the progress of Mr. C.'s fortunes: — that he had been taken into Lord Hawkesbury's office, and was become a leading authority for commercial and economical documents, and that, under Lord H.'s patronage, he had been particularly useful in resisting the abolition of the Slave Trade.

I recollect at this moment no other intercourse with Mr. C. previous to the coming out of the dedication already mentioned, which issued from the press without the slightest personal communication with myself or any of my friends, solely and expressedly on the ground of my being the reputed author of the popular but unowned pamphlet of

Jasper Wilson. I shall not say any thing of my feelings on this occasion; the path that I had to pursue with such a man, and at such a time, was extremely difficult to decide on. I sent Mr. C. a notice, however, that I did not mean to pass him wholly over. Accordingly a new edition of the pamphlet of J. W. being called for in the Spring of 1795, I prepared one with some care, and in the prefatory matter endeavoured to set Mr. C.'s conduct in the true point of view. But at that very moment I received certain information of the intended suspension of the habeas corpus act on the part of Government; an event which put the English press and its writers in a situation perfectly new, and which decided me to withdraw the new edition from the press, after it was already printed, or nearly so. An imperfect series of the proof sheets will be found among my papers.

I have never since engaged in any political writing. Previous to that period, I had the principal share in drawing up the resolutions of some public bodies, and subsequently I gave the form of the Liverpool petition against the restrictions of the freedom of the press.*

Sidmouth, 20th August, 1805.

APPENDIX, No. X. Page 65.

Papers read by Dr. Currie at the Literary Society.

No. 1.

SKETCH ON THE SUBJECT OF THE DIVISION OF LEGISLATIVE POWERS.

January, 1792.

MANY of the questions respecting government, which have been keenly agitated in the dawn of knowledge, we have no

* For the conclusion of this, added in Dr. Currie's own hand-writing, see the Narrative, page 401.

occasion to discuss. That its origin is derived from the wants and the weakness of human nature, we are all agreed; as well as that its ends are the general welfare and happiness. The spectres of "divine right," and of "hereditary indefeasible authority," have again stalked forth from the cloisters of Oxford, to frighten the land; but are fast retreating to those monkish cells, where it is hoped they will rest for ever. The day is too bright for them; they must flit into darkness. The sword of truth is drawn, they shrink at its sight: like the spear of Ithuriel, its touch withers, and every thing unholy vanishes into "thin air."

But, supposing us agreed on the general welfare being the foundation of government, how is the superstructure to be reared? It is evident that the simplest form is to fix on such a number of delegates as may be thought sufficient for information, and not too many to act together; and distributing this delegation equally, to invest these delegates, for a limited time, with all powers necessary for government. Experience, however, tells us that this is unsafe. A number of men, invested at once with the powers of making, interpreting, and executing the laws, have been found to have too much power; and they have advantages over those who delegate, scattered and disunited as they are, which the virtue of a public body, low as it generally is, has not hitherto been found able to resist. Having one interest, and that not only different from, but opposite to that of the people, such governments have generally terminated in aristocracy. Examples. — The first step taken, then, has been to separate the judicial from the legislative power, by which men making laws should not have the power of interpreting them, but be compelled themselves, as well as others, to admit their consequences, according to the interpretation of unbiassed judges. Again, The next step has been to separate the executive from the legislative department, lest men should be tempted to make laws for the benefit that might arise to themselves in executing them; a temptation which public bodies have never once been able to resist.

The separation, then, of judicial, legislative, and executive

powers, has been considered, pretty universally, as an established axiom in politics. Of these three powers, it is evident that the legislative is by far the greatest. It is the fountain of all: and the question is, can the people delegate this, safely, to a single house? Or should they divide it between two, requiring every proposed law to be examined by both, to be concurred in by a majority of both, and finally ratified by the executive? I am for the last of these methods, for the following reasons: —

1. Laws are the general principles which should regulate society; and to understand these thoroughly, requires much examination and research.

2. The proper information on the subject is best to be obtained by repeated examinations; and these require discussions by two separate bodies. The first opens the ground both for the public and those who form the second. Great meetings do not increase in wisdom with numbers, but the contrary; divide them, and you double their force. Two discussions, by two different bodies, necessary to inform the executive power. With two distinct bodies, the people may be at rest. If these differ, the latter can hear what is said on both sides, and decide the question themselves, if necessary.

No. 2.

ON ELOQUENCE.

Read at the Literary Society, Liverpool, March, 1792.

Subject. — What are the uses and abuses of Eloquence?

Eloquence is often applied to written composition; but, strictly speaking, it means the power of persuasion through the medium of speech.

Few men are entirely without this power; but still fewer possess it generally, and to any considerable degree. No faculty, perhaps, is subject to so many limitations as the oral

communication of thought. The great bulk of mankind are incapable of a recital that contains any number of circumstances; or of giving, in connection, a chain of reasoning that contains many links. Of those that are capable of this, some can convey their opinions to one or two persons only: others can speak distinctly to a meeting of greater size: and a few can speak to a large assembly; *their* eloquence is only limited by the boundaries of voice. The clearness, fluency, and persuasion of these different degrees of oral power, are generally in proportion to the range on which they act, supposing the subject to be equal. The speaker's mind is elevated by the sympathy of his audience, and kindles in proportion to the numbers that confess its powers.

Eloquence is much under the influence of habit. Men, accustomed to senatorial exertions, cannot, I am told, become warm in private conversation, without an instinctive inclination to get upon their legs. It is under this influence in other respects. Distinctness of utterance is the offspring of much time and long practice. Children are very defective in this; so are young people, though in a less degree. What is called slurring in speech, prevails through life with some, especially those who are naturally taciturn. Articulation in man does not reach its point of distinctness before twenty or upwards: in women, an earlier period may be fixed. Female occupations require much use of speech, because they are duties in detail. Besides, their employments are generally sedentary, and this leaves the breath at liberty. Their nerves are more delicate; and hence their sensibility, as well as fancy, is more lively; the natural consequence of which is, a more frequent utterance of thought, a greater fluency of speech, and a distinct articulation at an earlier age. Foreigners who acquire the true pronunciation of a language, articulate more distinctly than natives, because they labour more to acquire it.

Besides the different degrees of ease and distinctness of articulation, eloquence is characterised by different degrees of rapidity of utterance, of vividity of expression, of regu-

larity of thought, of delicacy of taste and passion, and of brilliancy of imagination.

The moral causes that obstruct eloquence, are all of a kind that distract the speaker's attention from his subject. These chiefly operate on his feelings, especially on his timidity, but sometimes also on his imagination, as might be easily shown.

A clear flow of words in the opening of a speech, or in the more level kinds of speaking, is not a *certain* sign of the higher kinds of oratory. The strongest powers are not always easily put in motion, the most vigorous attention is not most easily fixed. Demosthenes spoke at first hesitatingly and indistinctly, though afterwards clearly, warmly, and very rapidly; and this is, I believe, the case with the modern Demosthenes, Mr. Fox.

The hesitating manner of some good speakers in their opening address, is perhaps in part an organic defect, but more frequently owing to the *distraction of attention* already noticed. Hence also uncouth attitudes and gestures at first, which in a little while become easy and natural, if not graceful. Some great orators are easy, graceful, and fluent from the very outset; but the beginning of a speech seems seldom very interesting. A certain warmth of temperament appears necessary to fix not only the audience, but the speaker's own attention. The exercise of speech does this for him in part physically, in part morally: the attention concentrates; the subject brightens as it is viewed; the ideas present themselves in regular and rapid succession; the tongue gives them free utterance; the motions of the body, unthought of, come into sympathy with the mind; the stream of eloquence pours along; the orator, at length, brings the whole audience into unison with his thoughts; and, feeling himself, communicates to others that well regulated fervour of mind, the joint operation of reason, fancy, and sensibility, which is so quick to apprehend, so prompt to express, so favourable to all that is pure and liberal in thought, and great and fearless in action. This is eloquence — the gift of few, but perhaps the highest

of human endowments. Let us consider its influence on the happiness of mankind.

Nature has made us social, by our physical wants and our moral affections; and, being social, she has subjected us to government, by the necessity of laws to protect the weak, to restrain the wicked, and to direct the selfishness of each to the good of all. How are laws to be made? By delegates; and the powers of such delegation cannot be executed by, or safely trusted to, a few. If men are delegated, they must consult together; and how are they to consult together, but by a communication of their thoughts? But this requires the power of speaking in public with clearness and fluency, even on common occasions; with force and persuasion on all important questions; in one word, with eloquence.

Eloquence, then, is essential to representative government; it is the instrument of council, of union, of combined action; it is that which enables a nation to think in common and to act as one. It is, in part, perhaps the cause, but certainly the effect, of liberty; it resides in those high emotions of soul that naturally resist oppression, and succour the lowly; that shatter the nerves of the tyrant, and infuse into the slave life and strength.

The republics of Greece were, in a great measure, governed by eloquence, especially Athens. Their politics were good and bad by turns, but always variable, and generally rash, partaking rather of the chills and glows of sentiment, than of the steady temperature of reason. These faults arose not from eloquence, as some have said, but from the want of a representative legislation, and of distinction in powers. Yet eloquence did much for Athens: it enlightened her citizens, gave them power, knowledge, and a love of liberty; it produced an elevation of sentiment; and, above all, an activity of mind, that operated with astonishing force in almost every direction, and raised this turbulent people to an eminence which succeeding generations survey with surprise and admiration.

In modern times, with more scientific governments, the

blessings of eloquence are greater, its dangers less. Orators do not now, as in Athens and Rome, address a boundless and unstable multitude, ignorant, irrational, and unruly; often collected by chance from the general mass of citizens, and frequently pre-occupying the forum to the exclusion of others, by stratagem or force. The delegates of representative government are comparatively few in number, and in point of knowledge and talents, a selection from society. It may be presumed, then, that oratory in these days is more rational and less enthusiastic. Not that we can admit that reason is not the basis of all good oratory, and not only the basis, but by far the greatest part of its substance. Witness those most sublime of human efforts, the orations of Demosthenes, which held even the rude democracy of Athens in subjugation, and which, in happier times, might have "broken the bands of slavery asunder, and ruled the wilderness of free minds with unbounded sway." A foolish opinion prevails, that the common people do not understand reason, and must be governed by their passions and prejudices. Let Demosthenes speak for antiquity, and Thomas Paine for our own times.

The division of the legislative power into two branches, is perhaps a necessary precaution against the sudden effects of eloquence, and seems all that a representative government requires; for the restraints employed against the natural influence of great talents in public men in the constitution of France, seem founded on mistaken opinions, and no more suit a scientific government, than the ostracism of Athens.

Eloquence has become much less dangerous in our times, from our senatorial debates being printed. An orator now, in his loosest sallies, addresses not his audience only, but a whole nation; and, in his grander efforts, more than one nation are listeners. Hence what he may say warmly is judged of coolly, and brought to the test of reason and the standard of truth. If civilisation goes on with equal acceleration, the circle of a great orator's influence is likely to

extend still farther. The time is perhaps approaching, when the whole human race may "haste to his audience," and some future Chatham, under brighter auspices, may not figuratively, but in truth, "strike a blow in our senate that shall resound through the earth."

We live in most interesting times. Within the last few years eloquence has assumed a new form, has discussed loftier subjects, and risen to nobler heights. How much more beautiful are those questions which interest the human race, that every day brings into discussion, than those mere party questions which generated such animosity and strife, and wasted the finest talents on the most contemptible of purposes! The subjects discussed by Mr. Fox in the last session of parliament, are of more importance to the human race than all that our Parliamentary history affords since the commencement of the century, and are, perhaps, the beginning of a career that may carry him to a height of fame, as well as of true patriotism, that no Englishman ever attained.

In estimating the advantages of eloquence, let us not forget the still happier influences it is likely to produce, when not one but many nations shall be free. The reverberation of thought, the rivalship of sentiment, but more especially the rapidity with which moral notion will be communicated, and knowledge diffused; these promise advantages to the race of man that cannot be calculated, and may realise pictures of happiness now only to be found in the poet's dream. It is true the press is, in one sense, the instrument that moves the world; but see how eloquence quickens the powers of the press. A book travels slowly, and makes its way into the mind more slowly still; but a great orator speaks in Parliament, and his words fly in all directions. He gives an impulse that is carried in a few days to the extremities of the island, agitating and rousing as it goes; that stops not there, but vibrates across the Channel and the Atlantic, to thrill the nerves of freemen in other climes.

At present knowledge, when it springs up, may be said to

travel by express. But when representative assemblies shall be generally established, they will serve as watch-towers erected on corresponding eminences: — a blaze kindled in one will produce a corresponding flame in all, and knowledge will circulate with the rapidity of light.

Let us then give eloquence its due praise, as perhaps the greatest of human endowments, and no otherwise liable to perversion than all other faculties belonging to a being so imperfect as man.

No. 3.

ON PHYSIOGNOMY.

(Extracted from the Minutes of the Meeting of the Literaty Society, January 18. 1793.)

Dr. Currie would not dispute that there was some natural foundation for this science. Undoubtedly there is a correspondence between the passions and the sensations, and certain expressions of countenance; and where certain passions and sensations predominate in the mind, their corresponding expressions might predominate in the face, and becoming habitual, influence the features permanently. He would not, indeed, assert that this influence might not affect the bones over which the muscles of the face moved. Possibly the solid parts of the forehead, nose, and cheeks might be somewhat moulded by the character of the mind. But this mode of reasoning could hardly be extended to the bones of the head, or of any other part of the body, the muscles of which take no corresponding alteration of form from the passions or sensations of the mind. He doubted much whether the form of the skull could be supposed to be more influenced by habits of passion or of intellectual exertion, than those of any more remote part of the body.

Its being the seat of the mind, in a peculiar sense, might give a colour to the supposition of its having a more immediate connection with the qualities of mind; but till more facts were collected in support of this doctrine, it must rank as an hypothesis merely, though perhaps an ingenious one. As yet, facts were so very scanty that the *contour* of the skull of a man of good understanding had never been laid down. Certain heads had, indeed, been exhibited, and we were called upon to declare whether we did not feel at a single glance that such a one expressed profound understanding, &c. &c., and such another, weakness and folly. Such an appeal to certain supposed instinctive feelings was liable to great objections, and might be the source of many whims and fallacies, but could never be considered as a proper way of establishing the connection between mind and external form, while the last was capable of being delineated expressly. Let a man take the heads of a number of men of unquestionable talents on the one hand, and delineate the forms of these precisely; let him afterwards take the form of a number of an opposite character, and lay their proportions down also; let him then show what is common between those of the first class, and what is common between those of the second; let him finally point out wherein the two classes differ from each other, and the science of Physiognomy might be brought to a certain test. This had not been done. If Dr. Currie looked round the Society, he saw none but men of sense; but certainly a collection of heads differing more from each other could hardly be found anywhere.

He observed, also, that the expressions of the moveable parts of the face were liable to much misapprehension. The expressions of good nature and of folly were apt to be confounded, as were those of ill-nature and profound thought. Habitual anger contracted the frontal muscle, so did painful thought, and so also did nearness of sight. A certain smile very frequently was found to play habitually on the faces of villains; and it was not uncommon for the finest characters to have their countenances enveloped in an habitual gloom.

The outward expressions of haughtiness or of courage were, perhaps, as palpable as any other, yet every one knows how often they deceive.

In a word, it appeared to him that the deductions drawn even from the moveable parts of the face when at rest were liable to great fallacy; and that the only branch of physiognomy that could be much depended on, was that which judged of the existing state of the mind from the present expression of the countenance, which certainly often discovers the true state of the heart and its various emotions, when the tongue refuses utterance, or perhaps is employed to deceive.

In the course of his observations Dr. Currie said, that a fixed eye and a general calmness of the face were perhaps the surest indication of intelligence and understanding; and the contrary, of ignorance and folly.

No. 4.

EFFECTS OF THE DIFFERENT BRANCHES OF CULTIVATION OF MIND ON THE INDIVIDUAL.

(Paper read to the Literary Society in Liverpool, November 28. 1793.)

Behold that man, slow and steady in his gait; immovable in his features; he is deep in thought. He is a man deliberate in speech; his words part from his lips with difficulty. His expression rejects all ornament, and his mind is employed on facts, not on sentiments. He is a mathematician. If you attempt to converse with him, you must have patience. He looks for demonstration in what you advance, and objects to your positions as not being laid down in mathematical order. In his replies, he first sets about to correct the method of your statements according to his own notion; then pausing to see that he is right, he proceeds to answer you as if he were solving a problem. Of all science but his own, he is a great contemner. The words composing

the classical languages he knows, and he is acquainted with the principles of universal grammar; but of the taste of the immortal compositions those languages contain he knows nothing. The orators and poets of old times are, in his eye, a set of strange (and if he were to speak his mind), a set of useless fellows. The Metamorphoses of Ovid, in his judgment, are no better than old women's fables; and as to the Æneid of Virgil, there is no truth in it.

The manners of this man are dry and simple, — he is virtuous. You may depend on his promise, — he loves truth. But you must not expect from him any very sublime act, either of friendship or heroism.

The man that follows him is of a more liberal deportment. His features, you see, have more variety of expression, and bear the traces of deep and various thought. As he walks along, you see his eye bearing on the ground, and his pace becomes gradually slower, as is usual for those who are meditating some difficult subject. Now he throws his head up, thrusts his hand into his bosom, and resumes his former gait. He was musing on a subject that lies on the utmost verge of the intellectual vision. He had passed that verge, and found himself involved in darkness. You see he gives the matter up, and the play of his features, almost amounting to a smile, arises from an immediate consciousness of his own weakness, and a passing reflection on the vanity of those contentions that are founded merely on the difference of human opinions. I need not tell you that he is a metaphysician. You may approach him. He is very gentle and very conversible. There are few subjects on which he cannot talk. He has his principles in morals, as the other has in metaphysics; but he does not adhere to them so closely. If you speak to him on government, you will find he is very fluent on the subject, and tries institutions of every kind by certain rules, founded on general utility, or the nature of man. If you converse with him on the passions, he treats the whole subject familiarly, examines their influence on reason, their use, and their abuse. If you speak to him on

the laws of composition, he is at home here also, and is ready to analyse genius, as Newton analysed light.

In general, he is candid and clear in his conversation, liberal in his opinions, and unaffected in his manners. The truth is, his candour arises in part from his doubts; for he is rather a sceptic, and has not much confidence in the first principles he asssumes. Men of his class are often great mathematicians, and they are commonly well versed in history, which affords many of their materials, — materials that they are apt to work up too much with their own speculations. They have more general knowledge than perhaps any other description of men, for their science embraces the principles of all knowledge at the source. When they dispute with each other, it is never about facts, but first principles, on which they differ entirely. Some of them see nothing but order and design in the universe, others perceive nothing but fatalism and chance. Some believe in the existence of matter only, some in the existence only of spirit; some believe in both, and some in neither. Yet in spite of all these differences of opinion, they are in general men of pure morals, without even excepting those who seem to take from morals their highest sanctions.

But here comes a man of a different appearance. His dress is disordered; his arms are folded across; his countenance bespeaks strong emotion. He casts his eye sometimes on the surface of the ground, sometimes on the sky. You may hear him sometimes on a summer's evening playing soft music on the banks of a stream, and sometimes you may see him gazing on the western clouds, as if he discovered the countenance of some aërial being among their changing hues. See! he has left the walk, and has reached the top of the hill. He treads the summit, you see, as one that disdains the earth he rests on. Is it the setting sun that he addresses, or the southern breeze? No. Borne on the wings of imagination, the enthusiast has left the world behind him; he is on the top of Olympus, and is holding converse with the gods! Behold a genuine poet.

Though these portraits are highly coloured, and the last one, especially, may be considered as a caricature, yet they are drawn from the life, and have their foundation in nature.

If we consider, indeed, the nature of the human mind, we shall find, between the studies, the deportment, and the moral characters of each of these different descriptions of men a strong, and, perhaps, a necessary connection.

Reason, passion, and imagination, — these are the component parts of the human mind, and the extinguishing any one of them will leave it imperfect. A sound mind is one that possesses them all in due proportion; a great mind is one that preserves the just proportion, and possesses all these faculties in a superior degree. This just proportion requires a predominance of reason, in whatever degree passion and imagination may exist.

Every exertion of virtue requires the exercise of reason; all that is great in character, or valuable in knowledge, requires labour, patience, and self-command. But the mathematician is in the constant habit of exercising the power he possesses over his own ideas, and by habit every power of mind and body is strengthened. The power of commanding the ideas is perhaps the same with that which restrains the passions, and the power which restrains the passions is the essence of virtue itself.

On the other hand we may observe, that the strength of the passions decays by want of exercise, and the mathematician, deeply engaged in the investigation of truth, has little time, and less inclination, to listen to their seductions. These two considerations will abundantly explain what I am disposed to support as a fact, that there can hardly a single instance be found, of a man profoundly versed in the mathematical sciences becoming the slave of his passions.

It may, however, be observed, that the same principles will not apply if we consider the dangers to virtue on the side of selfishness. And this is true: our social affections, which are the source of many of our vices, are also the

source of many of our virtues; and the study of the abstract sciences has a constant tendency to weaken the social affections. Yet the severity of study has a tendency to abstract the mind also from selfish principles; and you will, perhaps, oftener find the man of pure science unfeeling than mercenary. One striking defect of too constant application to mathematical studies is, that they do not afford a sufficient variety to the human faculties, and that they narrow as well as blunt the human understanding, by confining its objects, benumbing the sensibility, and contracting the heart.

But how does this reasoning apply to the poet? A few words will explain this. In mere exercises of the imagination the mind is almost wholly passive; and it is passive also when it gives the passions the reins, and sacrifices to the pleasures of the moment its lasting interests.

The exercise of the imagination strengthens not the imagination only but the sensibility; and again, a quickened sensibility makes the mind more alive to all the impulses of passion.

It may be observed, also, that the faculties of mind exerted in scientific pursuits do not leave the spirits exhausted and depressed as after high exertions of imagination, and do not, therefore, produce those temptations to recruit the spirits by artificial means, to which poets are more especially exposed.

All these observations are to be taken with many restrictions; for though, for the sake of precision, I have spoken of reason, passion, and imagination, as distinct powers of mind, yet they are never found wholly separate in any of the operations of mind. On the contrary, more than one power is always employed in every great exertion, and generally the whole are employed. In the higher branches of mathemamatics, it is well known that powerful impulses are given to the imagination. He who, from the fall of an apple, first conceived, and afterwards demonstrated, the laws of the heavenly bodies, must have had an imagination of the sublimest kind. In like manner, in all the greater works of

poetry, though imagination predominates, perhaps, the taste, the feelings, the judgment, are all busy; and the greatest poets of every age have not been more celebrated for the brilliancy of their fancy than for the extraordinary vigour of their understanding. If I had not already taken up too much time, I would have shown that, in a moral point of view, metaphysics lie in the middle between poetry and mathematics, but more nearly approaching the latter; and that the orator stands, again, in the middle, between the metaphysician and the poet.

It is common in education to endeavour to find out the bias of a child, and to encourage it. This practice I should be disposed to reverse. If I found a young poet in my family, I would do my best to make him a mathematician; if I had a young mathematician, I would cultivate his taste for poetry as far as nature would permit, convinced that a due proportion of the different faculties of mind is that which is best calculated to make the individual virtuous and happy.

APPENDIX, No. XI.

CRITICISM ON BURKE'S REFLECTIONS ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

1790.

Few publications ever excited greater expectation than Mr. Burke's intended pamphlet on the French Revolution; — no work was, perhaps, ever read with greater anxiety, and certainly no one ever more completely confounded the apprehension, and bewildered the judgment of its readers.

People were curious to know how the defender of Whiggism in England would limit the principles by which that system is supported; what the champion of the American revolution, founded on *theoretical* grievances, could say against the revolution of France, originating in *substantial* oppressions; what he, who for twenty-five years had pressed

so hard on the *limited* prerogative of the crown in this country, could have to offer in favour of its *unlimited* power in another country; what a professed disciple of the *Reformation* in England could advance in favour of the *Roman Catholic establishment* in France.

A large and a learned description of men looked forward to this pamphlet not only with general but with personal anxiety.

They saw, or thought they saw, that the French in the [illegible] of reform had overturned parts of the fabric of their old government which bore an analogy to certain portions of the edifice of our own constitution, by them held sacred, and under which they found shelter and protection. They had heard with horror men of strong powers in this country declare these parts ill suited to the rest of the building, and call for them to be removed as a deformity. They apprehended that the conduct of the French might increase the activity and numbers of these bold innovators; that the contagion of example might spread with the extension of opinion, and the nodding turrets be tumbled to the ground. What could they themselves do? *their* opposition was imputed to self-interest. But from the pen of Burke, who had already declared himself in their favour, they might hope for a boon to be received with pious gratitude, and one such as no other could bestow. Nor was this all that favoured the reception of the work. Men of calm and enlightened minds were pleased to see a subject, so singularly interesting, in the hands of one who had a right to the palm of genius, and who had pretensions to that of philosophy; who had the advantage of considering the subject with the coolness of a bystander, who, though he wrote with the avowed purpose of censure, might candidly bestow praise, where praise was due; might point out the limits between liberty and licentiousness, and produce a work of powerful influence in fixing the opinions of mankind. A publication of this kind, they saw, might be especially useful at the present crisis, when men's minds are fermenting with new ideas; it would strengthen

governments already reformed on the principles of freedom; it might allay the fever of reformation in nations now labouring under it; and it would serve as a potent medicine in future times to those nations who have yet to undergo the inevitable disease! Can it be surprising that such a work excited universal expectation, and that two editions were sold in as many days?

At length it issues from the press. I have purchased and read it; and I arise from the task wearied and exhausted, my head confused with a whirl of indistinct ideas, and my heart aching with disappointment, sorrow, and indignation. Instead of an accurate, sober, and candid investigation of the principles of government, as applicable to the wonderful changes that have taken place in France, it has all the looseness and incoherence of a speech in Parliament, and like most of the speeches of the author, it is a violent and bitter invective from first to last. Dr. Price, the Revolution Club, the National Assembly, the city of Paris, pass in review, and receive from this wild, though eloquent, declaimer, epithets of the foulest abuse, and imputations of crimes of the blackest nature. The whole train of *Indian imagery* is again produced in almost the same forms of combination: — robbery, treason, *rapes*, sacrilege, murder, *dance through his pages in all the mazes of metaphorical confusion.* There is indeed the phrensy of the poet, but there is more than poetical phrensy; an exaggeration that trespasses the limits not only of truth but probability, and an irascibility that scorns all connection with reason, decency, or common sense.

But let me not deal entirely in censure. Though his positions are every where devoid of accuracy, and those most obviously just require exceptions and limitations, which they do not receive, yet many of them have a foundation in important truths and practical wisdom. And even his wildest flights of passion are decorated with the flashings of genius. The keenness of his invectives is contrasted by the splendour of his imagination: the same stem produces the thorn and the rose!

Yet with all its present popularity, the work cannot live: it is the stamp of truth only which gives the passport to immortality. Whoever treats of human nature, and writes for futurity, must speak the language of moderation and candour. Compounded of good and evil, of wisdom and weakness, unmixed censure is as inapplicable to man as unmixed praise. If, indeed, there be a scene that is calculated to display human nature in its brightest form, to overwhelm every selfish principle, and to call forth the heroic passions, and the purer and higher gifts of mind, it is that awful crisis which takes place when an enlightened people assert their freedom, and, bursting their fetters, appeal to the God of battles for the justice of their cause.

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